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Causes of the Increase  
of Methodism & Dissension  
by R. A. Ingram, 1807

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THE  
CAUSES OF THE INCREASE  
OF  
METHODISM & DISSENSION,  
&c. &c.

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[PRICE FOUR SHILLINGS.]

1807





THE  
CAUSES OF THE INCREASE  
OF  
METHODISM & DISSENSION,

AND OF THE  
POPULARITY OF WHAT IS CALLED  
*EVANGELICAL PREACHING,*

AND THE  
MEANS OF OBVIATING THEM,

CONSIDERED IN  
*A SERMON,*  
PREACHED AT THE VISITATION OF THE  
Rev. the ARCHDEACON of LEICESTER,  
HELD AT MELTON MOWBRAY,  
JUNE 20, 1805;

AND  
SUBJOINED APPENDIXES;  
IN WHICH IS CONTAINED THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED  
AT MELTON MOWBRAY, JUNE 5, 1806, AT THE VISITATION OF  
THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,  
ON THE IMPROVEMENT AND EXTENSION OF  
*POPULAR EDUCATION;*

TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
*A POSTSCRIPT,*  
CONTAINING REMARKS ON MR. WHITBREAD'S BILL FOR PROMOTING  
AND ENCOURAGING OF INDUSTRY AMONGST THE LABOURING CLASSES  
OF THE COMMUNITY, AND FOR THE RELIEF AND REGULATION OF  
THE NECESSITOUS AND CRIMINAL POOR.

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By ROBERT ACKLOM INGRAM, B.D.  
RECTOR OF SEGRAVE, LEICESTERSHIRE.

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## PREFACE.

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THE very considerable number of Methodists, and Dissenters, in every part of the kingdom; their rapid increase of late years; the increasing popularity of what is called *Evangelical* preaching, and the diminished attachment of the mass of the people to the Established Church, but particularly to their parish churches; are subjects that cannot be regarded, in these times, with any share of indifference and unconcern. We are not to consider them as the effects merely of an unavoidable diversity of sentiment, or of that absurdity and erroneous judgment, which must ever be expected in unenlightened minds. We are under the necessity of viewing them in connection with the political interests of the community; and with some unpleasant apprehensions, when it is recollected

that the sentiments of many of the Dissenters, and of several of the Methodists also, are unfavourable to our civil, as well as ecclesiastical institutions; that religion is sometimes only a gloss, or watch-word, to political disaffection; and that the popular doctrines have a tendency to promote those revolutionary sentiments which have been so assiduously propagated of late years.\* We cannot but observe, that when one species of salutary attachment, as that

\* The Evangelical clergy of the Established Church, we believe, are, in general, well affected towards government; but this is at least doubtful with respect to many of their followers, who approximate to Dissenters in sentiments and manners, associate more familiarly, in private life, with some classes of Dissenters, than with other members of the Established Church, and commonly add to the strength of the dissenting party in any political struggle. Their principles, it is probable, incline to democracy and revolution, more than they are aware of, or than accords with their professions of attachment to government, in which, we hope, they are sincere. The Calvinistic doctrines raise the people in their own estimation on a comparison with their superiors; and how easy the transition is to political sentiments of the most licentious complexion, we have heretofore fatally experienced in this kingdom.

between a parishioner and his minister, is infringed, the violation of any other is facilitated; and must, therefore, remark with concern, that, to whatever causes it is to be attributed, the most serious part of the lower classes are very generally united to some Methodistical or Dissenting congregation.

It is certainly a very grating circumstance to a conscientious pains-taking clergyman to perceive his congregation desert him, and especially to follow after some person of no respectable qualifications, that will bear a comparison with his own. But the clergy too frequently have shewn themselves exasperated at the fact; and have betrayed a degree of anger and passionate resentment in their conversations with their parishioners, as well as in their discourses from the pulpit, which has only widened the breach. Some have attempted to meet the evil by the circulation of little tracts, levelled for the most part against the Methodists, and designed to confute the errors of Calvinism; in which however the same spirit of invective has

sometimes been discovered ; while the argument has been unintelligible to the generality of those to whom it was immediately addressed, and the charge of Calvinism is denied by their leaders.\*

When I was requested to preach at the Archdeacon's Visitation, I was anxious to embrace the opportunity of calling the attention of my clerical brethren to this very interesting subject ; and of urging them, in lieu of unprofitable controversy, to pursue other means, that appeared to lie in their power, of counteracting what seemed

\* Far am I from objecting to the distribution of well-selected tracts, or the delivery of temperate discourses, on the subject of the differences between us and the Methodists, or Evangelical party. But I am persuaded, that cool and dispassionate conversations between a clergyman, and those of his parishioners who are inclined to the Methodistical persuasion, would have a much more desirable effect, especially on the more reasonable and considerate part of them ; in which he might instance the several particulars in which his endeavours to do good, to repress licentiousness, and promote parochial reformations, are impeded, or defeated, by the influence of the Methodists ; and might evince the superior advantages of union, and co-operation, in the promotion of every good work.

to portend so much evil to the community. But, as the causes are very multifarious, which have contributed to the increasing dismemberment of the national Church, no doubt other methods must be used of counteracting their influence, besides an additional share of professional zeal. I wished, therefore, to consider the various causes of Methodism and Dissension, and the means of obviating them, more at large, than could be done with convenience and propriety in the course of a Sermon; which I have accordingly attempted in the subjoined Appendixes. The Methodists, and those sects of Dissenters which approximate to them most nearly in sentiments and habits, appear to be the most popular persuasions; and, therefore, my attention has been chiefly directed to them, or what is called *Evangelical*, or, by the populace, *Gospel* preaching. Individuals are often attracted to the less numerous classes of Dissenters by reasons that are not calculated to render them popular.

It may be remarked, that a considerable time has been permitted to elapse between

the delivery, and the publication of the following Discourse. It was my desire to have submitted my sentiments to the consideration of those of my clerical brethren, who were commonly regarded as the warmest friends of the Established Church, by inserting them in some Magazine that was circulated amongst that respectable class of men; and I imagined that such a publication would be a proper vehicle for any discussion which my observations might possibly occasion; as I was prepared to attend to any animadversions which seemed deserving of notice. I thought, also, it might be of some advantage, that such a discussion should be confined, chiefly, in the first instance, to the friends of the Church. I considered it advisable, if a reformation was requisite in any thing that related to the established religion, or the conduct of its ministers, that it should be undertaken, and without delay, by the friends of the Church; lest, by the increasing influence of a popular party, a desire of innovation should supersede reformation, and the subversion of the Church



should be followed by the dissolution of social order. I intended, therefore, to have inserted the substance of these pages in the form of Essays in the Orthodox Churchman's Magazine, and at different times had transmitted to the Editor the second Appendix, pretty nearly in its present state, with the addition only of a few sentiments from other parts of the present publication. The first portion was inserted in the Magazine for November 1806. In the Magazine for the January following, the Editor gave me to understand that the remainder of the Essay could not be inserted in its present state. I was not willing to be under any obligation to defend implicitly the sentiments of a particular party, whether called Orthodox, High Church, or Evangelical, but wished to indulge that freedom of discussion which the urgency of the occasion appeared to demand. Nor could I submit to solicit a place for my Essays in any publication that was regarded as unfriendly to the interests of the Church. I, therefore, determined to adopt this mode of publication, and submit my

opinions, in their present form, to the inspection of an impartial public. The candid reader will now have an opportunity of taking a comprehensive view of the whole of the subject; and I must, therefore, request him not to pass a hasty judgment upon my principles and sentiments from a partial perusal of the following pages. I shall only further observe, that the means which have hitherto been used, of obviating the evils we at present deplore, have failed of their effect; that it is high time that our attention should be directed to the amendment of our own deficiencies, whatever they may be; and that such methods, as are approved of by reason and religion, should be pursued with zeal, energy, and resolution; lest the predominance of a popular religion should again lay the foundation of a popular government, which should terminate in licentiousness and despotism.

THE  
CAUSES OF THE INCREASE  
OF  
METHODISM & DISSENSION,  
&c. &c.

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Rom. xiv. 17 and 19.

*The kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.—Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

IN every period of society, such is the imperfection of human nature, we cannot but remark a disposition in mankind to embrace some ostensible token of piety, as if it were a more certain criterion of the warmth of their religious zeal, and afforded a better claim to the favour of heaven, than the practical duties of common life. Various have been the causes that have contributed to this mistaken apprehension of the nature of a religious profession. To abstain cautiously from certain proscribed meats and drinks; to impose upon ourselves occasional fasts; to perform daily, with

scrupulous accuracy, some religious ceremony; are much less irksome restraints on the nature of man than to keep our sinful propensities in a state of constant subjection, and to be assiduous in the practice of the more essential duties of piety and morality. A weak and superstitious mind also regards with superior veneration whatever observances have an immediate reference to the worship of the Deity, than it does those duties that chiefly relate to the promotion of human happiness. Too often has some share of worldly-mindedness been blended with the religious profession. *To make broad the phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of the garment*; to exhibit external marks of contrition and repentance; or to *make long prayers* in public; are more calculated to excite popular admiration and applause, than those secret duties, when the *left hand knows not what the right hand doeth*; and the human mind too willingly indulges the hope, that the favour of heaven will be proportioned to the approbation of men. The mind also is gratified in performing such offices as surpass the powers of the mass of mankind, in making a display of extensive erudition, or superior powers of argumentation and discernment; and the palm of victory is often contended for rather than the advancement of a spiritual kingdom, and a crown of immortal glory. Interested individuals have also studiously sought for some

token or criterion, by which their adherents might be distinguished from other Christians, as the peculiar favourites of heaven; and a theological sentiment has been adopted too often as the watch-word of a political faction.

What has been influenced by such erroneous motives could not but be attended with injurious effects. An improper estimation of the comparative value and importance of different duties is promoted; and the mind too readily hopes, by some superstitious observance, or specious token of devout zeal, to avert that divine vengeance, which is justly provoked by the manifold errors of its life. "I have peace-offerings with me," says the presumptuous harlot to the incautious youth; "this day have I paid my vows; therefore came I forth to meet thee." The attention also is diverted too much from the more essential duties of Christianity; and the most valuable mental endowments are often pressed into the service of theological controversy, and engaged in elucidating some topic of abstruse speculation, that might have been much more advantageously occupied in meliorating the condition of human society. But what has been the most injurious result of these erroneous conceptions of religion, is, that they have defeated a principal design of the Christian dispensation by destroying the harmony of Christ's church, and exciting the most inveterate dissen-

sions; each party too frequently regarding those that differ from them as the enemies of heaven, and avoiding them more cautiously than the very adversaries of revealed truth.

With a view of obviating these unhappy consequences of this perversion of religion, my present intention is, to submit to your consideration the sentiments of the apostle with regard to those diversities of opinion and practice, which had already disquieted the Christian church. It will be readily conceded, in the present enlightened age, that *the kingdom of God*, or the essence of true religion, consists in the promotion of *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. But it may require a few more words, as an object not so universally acknowledged, which yet may be inferred from the text, as illustrated by the context, to prove, that a pertinacious attachment to such religious opinions, as are not essentially conducive to the promotion of *righteousness, peace, and holy joy*; so as to consider them as indispensable conditions of Christian communion, or to regard the discussion and propagation of them as objects of primary importance, is irreconcilable with the true spirit of the religion of Christ.

The apostle is particularly earnest in dissuading us from perplexing ourselves about subjects, *which minister questions, rather than godly edifying*. "The end of the commandment," says he, "is

“ charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling;”—and he reprobates, with pointed severity, those “ who dote about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds.” “ Ye are yet carnal,” says he to the Corinthians; “ for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

It merits our attention to remark also, who are the persons whom we are cautiously instructed to avoid, as unworthy of our society. They are those who live in the practice of any gross immorality. “ I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat.” They are those also, who, from worldly and carnal motives, are instrumental in fomenting dissensions in the Christian church; those, *who cause divisions and offences contrary to the true doctrine of Christ*; those, *who dote about questions and strifes of words*; from these we are directed to *withdraw* ourselves. But he, on the other hand, that is unhappily misled to embrace an opinion, which he peaceably and quietly avows, is not equally considered as an

object of aversion. Though we know, that *all things are lawful*; though we know, that *there is nothing unclean of itself*; yet “it is good  
 “neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any  
 “thing, by which a brother stumbleth, or is of-  
 “fended.” “Him, that is weak in the faith,” we  
 are directed to “receive, but not to doubtful  
 “disputations.” We are to be made *all things to  
 all men, that by all means we may save some.*

From the above passages jointly considered we may surely infer, that the apostle regards the state of disunion and animosity, as the evil to be obviated and reformed, rather than an unavoidable diversity of sentiment; and that our principal endeavour, according to the latter clause of my text, should be to promote the peace of Christ's church, and to prevent a dissolution of harmony, rather than to exhaust our talents by a fruitless effort to produce that universal agreement in opinion, which the infirmities of human nature must ever render impracticable.

As a simple proposition, truth is indisputably preferable to error. But there are many truths, which will not repay the labour of investigating them, much less of attempting to effect their general reception. A proposition also, or its negative, may be important, as it relates to persons of erudition, that is of trivial moment with regard to those classes that are incapable of discriminating



its force and application; and yet, though uninteresting in this sense, it may be rendered of consequence by fortuitous circumstances. In this case, it seems most conducive to the peace of Christ's church, and the interests of the community, to diminish, as much as possible, its accidental importance, and to withdraw it from public observation, rather than to hold it up as a bone of contention, the watch-word of a particular party, and an essential branch of that religious profession, whose chief object is popular instruction.

But what now, let me ask, have been the principal subjects of dissension in the Christian world? We rarely dispute about the fundamental duties of piety and morality, or those principles of religious conduct, which are most intimately connected with the general business of life. It is readily allowed by every denomination of Christians, however different their practice may often be, that we should *do no murder*, should *not steal*, should *not commit adultery*, that we should *be true and just in all our dealings*, and *keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity*. No one presumes to deny that we should love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves: but, in proportion as any subject is more involved in mystery and obscurity; in proportion as it is more remote from the duties of common life, or has only an inferential connection with them, which is not

perceptible but by the most highly refined and improved understandings; in that proportion does it appear to have most agitated and distracted the Christian church. Propositions, that have bespoke a critical and accurate knowledge of the languages in which the sacred writings were composed, and a large extent of biblical learning, have been represented as necessary articles of the popular creed, and indispensable conditions of salvation. It needs no argument to evince the unreasonableness and folly of such procedure. And when the illiterate part of mankind are persuaded to adopt any speculative opinions, that are far removed beyond the powers of their limited conceptions, we must conclude, that they are actuated by other motives and inducements, than undoubted conviction of their truth; that they are under the influence of some worldly principle; or that they are attracted by the apparent zeal of the leaders of their party, whose doctrines are so explained, as to clash with the prejudices or weaknesses of uninformed minds, or to furnish the terrified sinner with too flattering hopes of forgiveness on the first moments of contrition, or a groundless, as impious, assurance of pardon and salvation. And if such are the true sources of the evils we lament, we must adopt other means of preventing schisms, or putting a period to existing dissensions, than by promoting those controversial inquiries, which gen-

*der strifes, rather than godly edifying.* On every such occasion, our concern is rather to remark the evils we have most reason to deplore; to trace out the sources from whence those evils have chiefly originated; and to pursue the appropriate means of obviating the efficient causes.

Let us now apply the sentiments of this discourse to the circumstances of the present times.

In questions that relate to the religious establishment, if peace and union are prominent objects of our attention, it will not so much concern us to examine whether the national Church has acquired a degree of perfection, that is hardly to be expected in any human institution, or whether opinions not essentially conducive to *righteousness, peace, and joy*, have for reasons, which appeared more urgent in a former period of society, than they do at present, been incautiously adopted into the national creed; as whether, by any sacrifice, that conscience allows of, we can severally continue united with the great body of Christ's flock. That principle of accommodation, which the apostle so earnestly recommends, is surely incumbent on individuals rather than on the established Church in its collective capacity. A perpetual revisal of the national code of faith and discipline, in deference to the varying sentiments of mankind, might give to opinions an imaginary importance, which they are no longer allowed to possess; might revive

dissensions, which the tranquillity of the Church required to be buried in oblivion; and perhaps excite new and unheard-of causes of schism and animosity. Does it not then appear more safe, on the part of the guardians of the national Church, to withdraw penalties gradually, where they are thought severe, to relax the hand of discipline, when it appears unreasonable, or oppressive, and to accept of a tacit acquiescence, and peaceable demeanour, in lieu of implicit faith and unlimited obedience? \* These opinions do not necessarily bespeak an aversion from reformation. Whenever a tacit change and improvement of sentiment have sufficiently prepared the way, there are certain seasons for attempting a more ostensible and complete reform; but those seasons should be very cautiously discriminated.

In the next place, the most prominent features of dissension and controversy, that, at present, agitate the Christian church, appear to relate to those opinions on the one hand, that are more generally adopted by men of inquiring minds and extensive erudition, and the greater part of the regularly educated clergy; and the sentiments of certain persons on the other, whether of the Church, or professed Dissenters, that are more successful in recommending themselves, and their doctrines,

\* See Appendix, No. I.

among the lower and more illiterate orders of the community. Little good can be expected from continuing the controversy with the view of promoting *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Our elaborate disquisitions will not be read, or, certainly, not understood, by the mass of those people, whose benefit is chiefly intended. Nor can we have much more hopes of producing conviction in the minds of those of their leaders, who are accustomed to think lightly of the reasoning powers, that appeal to an internal guide, and regard, as an argument of their truth, the success of their doctrines on the bulk of the community. Besides, controversy, as an act of hostility, indisposes the mind for discerning how much of any existing diversity of sentiment is to be referred rather to a partial confusion of ideas, an inaccurate use of terms, and a diversity of phraseology; than to any more essential disagreement.\*

\* Friendly conferences, and temperate disquisitions, amongst intelligent men, doubtless contribute to elicit truth; and it is to be wished, that every person were prepared, on all proper occasions, to explain, and defend, his own opinions. It is also desirable, that those, who differ in opinion, should be brought to have a clear perception of the particulars in which they differ, and of the validity of the arguments by which their respective sentiments are supported. But, when the attempt is hopeless, it had better be omitted, lest a difference in opinion, on some perhaps not very important subject, should be converted into a breach of Christian amity; which will too

The first evil, that presents itself to our notice, as the source of many others that usually follow in train, is the secession of a large portion of our congregations from many of our respective churches; and the inquiry is, by what honest means we may bring back the wandering flocks to their deserted folds, or prevent a more general defection.\* To court popularity must not be our predominant object. That mode of preaching, or intercourse with the lower classes, which produces the most striking, does not always generate the best and happiest effects, or the most permanent. Impassioned oratory is not calculated to have the same desirable influence on a parish, as a series of good conduct, and the lustre of a virtuous example. But to secure the affections, as well as the respect of his own flock, every minister of the gospel must regard as a principal object of his pastoral care, and the basis of parochial improvement.

Removed, as we too commonly are in the course of our education, at a distance from the lower orders of the community; almost with no share of

generally happen where minds are not previously improved by philosophical research. By these remarks, the author wishes to obviate any appearance of inconsistency, and prevent his sentiments from being misunderstood; as controversy is indiscriminately descried by some that possess popular talents, but betray a manifest inferiority in the powers of argumentation.

\* See Appendix, No. II.

appropriate professional instruction, or conformation of manners; trained rather for disputation, than a life of diffusive benevolence; we are often admitted into the ministry with no practical knowledge of that improving intercourse, and no inclination to pursue it, which, without any degradation of the clerical character, is calculated to produce the happiest effects upon the manners of the inferior classes.\* And if we have acquired no relish for the society of any but our equals, and are habitually attached only to their diversions and amusements, or to the employments of the closet; and discharge our professional duties as a task, or interruption to our ordinary pursuits and enjoyments; we are not to be surprised, if the sheep are easily seduced from a fold, which is watched only with a hireling's care; and might conclude, that we have something yet to learn from the conduct of the more popular clergy.

A small share of habitual intercourse with the lower orders of mankind will suffice to convince us, that a language philosophically accurate is to them unintelligible, that every refined and sententious expression, every rhetorical ornament, and that

\* See Appendix, No. III.—In consequence of our not having an education duly accommodated to our profession, we come to the ministry ignorant of our proper deportment, and find out our deficiency only, when, perhaps, it is too late to correct it, or supply what is wanting.

classical diction, by which we are taught to embellish our compositions, elevate them far beyond the level of a vulgar comprehension. By the same means we may easily discover, what a moderate portion of biblical knowledge, what a scanty language, and poverty of ideas, we must generally presuppose, as the basis of our pastoral instructions. It must be our endeavour in some degree to correct, and obviate, this inconvenience. By private conversations with the lower classes of our parishioners we may gradually supply what is most deficient; we may learn to accommodate our discourses to their conceptions, or familiarize them to our phraseology. Our efforts will generally be most successful, when our attention is directed to the rising generation. We may from the earliest periods instil into them such elementary knowledge, as may best prepare them for a right understanding of the service of the Church. We may by degrees correct their solecisms, and enlarge their vocabulary. By frequent examinations by question and answer we may awaken their attention to religious subjects, we may exercise their expanding powers of judgment and reflection, and may direct their thoughts into such a channel, as is most coincident with the tenour of our public addresses. And, what is of still more importance, we may attach their minds to our own; we may remove those obstacles by which their access to their superiors



is impeded, as they need direction and advice ; and dispose them to look to ourselves for instruction, rather than to any other person. By the same pastoral intercourse we may gain a perfect knowledge of the circumstances and concerns of each poor family, we may ascertain the nature and magnitude of their distresses, and the best means of administering to their relief : we shall feel an interest in their prosperity, and watch opportunities of administering to their spiritual and temporal welfare : and may find at length, that the most obscure of rural retirements are by no means destitute of social pleasures.

In lieu, then, of regarding the success and popularity of other preachers with an eye of jealousy ; in lieu of debasing our characters by a proneness to suspect them of insincerity ; or, again, contending with them in the bitterness of controversy, let us rather strive to emulate them by our good works. Let us proffer them the right hand of fellowship, and readily co-operate with them in every praiseworthy undertaking. Friendly deportment may generate an approximation of sentiment and conduct, which controversy only impedes ; it may repair the breaches the Church has sustained, and again unite us all in the bonds of amity and concord.

Finally, my reverend brethren, whatever our opinions may be on some disputable points, let us

all demean ourselves as men that are in earnest for the salvation of our own souls, and the souls of our fellow Christians. If we not only believe in God, and a future state of existence, but have our minds habitually impressed with an awful sense of their importance, religion will be ever the preferred topic of our conversation, and the most prominent feature in our whole deportment. A species of diffidence restrains many from discoursing freely on religious topics, and displaying an ostensible appearance of devotional fervour; but does this diffidence or reserve accord with the character of the teacher of religion, *the light* by which the world is illuminated, *the salt* to season the earth, *the candle* raised aloft, that its lustre may be universally diffused? Does this unseasonable diffidence befit that person whose office it is to *uphold him that is falling, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees*; to guide and direct the wandering sinner into the paths of righteousness; and to be an example to all, that they be not *ashamed* of Christ, and his religion, *in this adulterous and sinful generation*? A distinguished purity and sedateness of manners, non-conformity to the world, renunciation of its ordinary pleasures, heavenly-mindedness, and devotional zeal, should eminently distinguish the Christian minister. We are *a city built upon a hill, that cannot be hid*: and under the circumstances of the present times

we may expect that our conduct will be scrutinized with a degree of severity, that bespeaks an absence of equity, as well as candour. Let it be our concern, then, that our *good be not evil spoken of*; and let us consent, with the apostle, *not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine*, to deny ourselves even innocent and lawful indulgences, rather than that the Christian name should be slandered by our deportment.

I shall not regard the present venerable congregation with such want of respect, as to proffer an apology for the freedom with which I have discoursed; nor attempt to parry the censures to which I have rendered myself obnoxious, by affectedly acknowledging, that I am amenable to the same strictures. To my *own master* I stand, or fall, as you to yours. I need not remind you, that the agents of infidelity, licentiousness, and disloyalty, too often even under the mark and garb of religion, are industriously labouring to unloose every bond by which the harmony of society is supported. If the husbandman sleeps, the *enemy* will not fail to sow his *tares*. If the *kingdom is divided against itself*, if the true church of Christ, the body of faithful and sincere Christians, is distracted by fruitless contentions, and our minds are more occupied by endless competitions and jealousies, than by the work of righteousness; we are not to wonder, that liber-

tinism and irreligion should erect their base standard over the ruins of a dismembered church.

But it may detract somewhat from the asperity of the censures to which I have exposed myself, if the following circumstance is properly considered. Every one of the numerous sects of Dissenters, by which the peace of Christ's church is unhappily infringed in this country, appears to have its respective synodical meetings or conventions, in which subjects, that relate to the interests, and employments, of their society, are canvassed, assented to, and prepared to be carried into effect; co-operation is solicited and secured; and by such judicious measures, their influence is greatly increased, and their beneficence also is rendered incomparably more extensive and efficacious. The same is asserted also of a certain portion of the clergy of the Established Church.\* Whereas, in their collective capacity, the national clergy are, in fact, no longer a deliberative body. No appropriate opportunity is afforded us of proposing subjects for the discussion of our brethren, of concerting plans of beneficence, and soliciting co-operation; we have almost no power of internal government, nor even the privi-

\* It is said, that at Creton in Northamptonshire between forty and fifty clergymen of the Church of England hold an annual meeting under the designation of Evangelical Preachers, where some leading man presides as a kind of Bishop.

lege of reforming our own body. Each individual clergyman in his particular sphere, as far as a competition is unavoidably kept up, finds himself exposed, in an unequal contest, to a well disciplined host of men. And the present annual meeting, which I have ventured to avail myself of, is the only opportunity, in which a private clergyman, once in his life perhaps, is allowed to address his clerical brethren on their professional concerns.

There is not now time, nor is this altogether the place, to enlarge on the present subject, or to explain the means by which the influence of the clergy, regarded as individuals, has been in an equal degree undermined, and almost subverted.\* I shall therefore only subjoin, that I have that confident opinion of the invincible integrity, the disinterested benevolence, and the extent of solid and liberal information, of that venerable order, of which I boast myself a member; that I am persuaded, it is only necessary, that their energies should be properly called forth, judiciously distributed, and efficaciously supported, to produce the most desirable effects, so that the rarest talents may no longer be fruitlessly exhausted in frivolous or endless controversy, that were formed for the noblest employments of beneficence and philanthropy.

\* See Appendix, No. IV.

## APPENDIX, No. I.

(See page 10.)

*On Subscription to the Articles of the Church of England.*

THE subject of subscription to the articles of the Church of England is so nearly connected with the sentiments of the passage referred to, that it may merit a transient consideration in this place. And, in noticing the causes of dissension, we must consider this subscription as one; though indeed the Calvinistic Dissenters and Methodists profess to adhere more rigidly to the doctrinal articles, than many of the members of the Established Church themselves.

In what sense are the articles of the Church of England to be subscribed? "The *animus imponentis*," it is said, must be the "rule of interpretation."\* But who is now to be considered as the *imponens*? Not, surely, "the legislature of the 13th *Eliz*:" but the existing legislature, that continues to exact the subscription; and which alone has the power of determining, in what sense it

\* See Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, Book III. Part I. Chap. 22.

expects that the articles should be subscribed. But it is not an easy task, or rather it is impossible, for an individual to collect, what is the *animus*, or sentiment, of the legislature. The several members of the legislature would have various opinions. Many of them have never thought maturely on the subject, and cannot be said to have any opinion. Were the question brought forward; if indeed the legislature did not evade a decision, which is not unlikely; their decision would be dictated, it is probable, by the general opinion of the most intelligent part of the community: and we have little hesitation in determining, that it accords with that opinion, to allow of a considerable latitude of construction; that is to say, that the *willingly*, and EX ANIMO, subscription should be interpreted as implying an acquiescence, in some sense, that does not necessarily amount to an absolute belief, or approbation, of every identical proposition in the 39 articles, or the three articles of Canon 36. As no interpretation has been made with regard to the latitude that is allowable, and any decision indeed would probably involve ambiguity; each individual must determine for himself *in foro conscientiae*, as to the extent, and particulars, in which he can differ in opinion from the articles, and yet subscribe *willingly*, and EX ANIMO, or officiate as a minister of the Established Church. It is only to be wished, that every person did subscribe in some sense,

rather than in none at all; that he acted upon principles he had maturely considered; and could, if required, give a rational explanation of his conduct.

But some may be disposed to object, that it cannot be allowable to acquiesce in what is deemed an erroneous opinion; since those who think it erroneous should bear their testimony against it. A distinction may certainly be made between such subjects, as, in the apprehension of the individual, are considered as of essential importance; and such as are not regarded as necessary topics of popular instruction. The degree of doubt and uncertainty in the individual's mind is also to be attended to. Some deference is likewise due to the authority by which the subscription is enjoined. It cannot be expected, that the world should be governed by the sentiments of any individual; and the possibility, or rather the very great probability, should be admitted, even by the person himself, that the error is on his side, if he is opposed by the general opinion of the more intelligent part of the community. But if the individual is justified in suppressing his opinions on common occasions upon such subjects, as are not a necessary branch of popular instruction, or could not with propriety be introduced into a popular address; still it may be his duty, and, perhaps, on no other consideration can his reserve be vindicated, than that he should embrace such op-



portunities as are compatible with peaceable demeanour, of contributing to the advancement of truth, and liberal inquiry, by conversations with, or appeals through the press to literary men.

The latitude of construction, which is here defended, is no more, than what is deemed requisite, when the same oaths, under all the varying circumstances of society, are exacted as qualifications for certain offices, including oaths to observe local statutes.\* It seems a necessary evil arising from the imposition of such tests; as otherwise the business of this world could not be properly conducted, and places of trust and confidence could only be conferred on persons of relaxed principles. I shall briefly subjoin, that to prevent this appearance of prevarication, which is oppressive and injurious only to persons of nice integrity; while others are not at all controlled; it is advisable by no means

\* See Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, Book III. Part I. C. 21. Paley is here referred to, as evincing a species of necessity, originating in the imperfect condition of human society, of regarding the intention, rather than the literal construction, of certain oaths; not that we can altogether approve of the facility with which the difficulty is obviated, and the sacredness of an oath allowed to be violated. But by subscription, something short of the obligation of an oath is manifestly intended; otherwise an oath would have been exacted. On a principle of acquiescence we may subscribe to a proposition, whose truth we would not affirm by an oath.

to multiply such tests, and to permit such tests, as are deemed necessary, to be expressed in as general terms, and to extend to as few particulars, as the occasions will allow of. Indeed the expediency of any such test will admit of a doubt.

## APPENDIX, No. II.

(See page 12.)

*On the Causes of the Popularity of Evangelical Preaching.*

IT will be proper, and agreeable to what has been advanced in the text, to ascertain, somewhat more at large indeed than could be conveniently done in the course of a Sermon, the causes which have principally contributed to raise the popularity of that class of preachers which have acquired the denomination of *Evangelical*. The Calvinistic opinions have generally been the most readily received by the less enlightened part of mankind. The favouritism, which Calvinism involves, naturally inspires the sincere preacher with an anxious desire to make converts to his opinions; by which the mind is often insensibly biassed to pursue means of gaining popularity, that are not all equally liberal and ingenuous.\* At the same time, it is highly

\* The more natural and genuine result of Calvinism would, probably, be a species of apathy and remissness. But there is so much inconsistency in the opinions of most professed Calvinists, that there are very few who maintain the several conclusions in their full extent, that unavoidably flow from the Calvinistic principles.

flattering to a common mind to be persuaded, that by adopting the manners and opinions of a particular sect, or class, of Christians, it ensures an easy pardon of all past offences, and is at once advanced in the estimation of heaven above the rich, the great, and the learned in this world, that are not yet *awakened*, or persuaded to adopt the same principles of sentiment and conduct. An unenlightened mind also, as incapable of tracing out the wonderful concatenation of causes and effects by which the universe is governed, is prepared to admit of that immediate and personal interposition of the divine Power, which accords with the Calvinistic principles, or is generally presupposed by Calvinistic and Evangelical preachers. The more ignorant part of mankind are equally incompetent to form a rational conception of the nature of spiritual beings, as to relish a philosophical religion, and have always been prone to anthropomorphism. The Evangelical divines, by holding forth Jesus Christ continually before the view, considered as actuated by partial favour, and other feelings, if not also imperfections, which make a part of the human character, encourage a species of anthropomorphism, and their followers are disposed to worship him with the same degree of servile adulation with which they would pay court to an earthly superior. Thus is the Evangelical or Calvinistic system accommodated to the gross conception of ignorant minds,

or those whose information is very confined. Far am I, however, from objecting to popular language in our communications with the illiterate classes of mankind, if used with discretion; not only as it is more intelligible to them, than such language, as is founded on strictly philosophical principles; but also as we should betray an unworthy notion of the powers of the vastly capacious mind of our almighty Creator, if we did not allow, that, in those dispensations of his providence, which are a part of a comprehensive system, he had respect to the circumstances of individuals, and foresaw, and designed, every good use that each individual could derive from them, considered as the effect of a particular providence.

In the next place; that the words and phrases of the common translation of the Bible are more generally adopted in the discourses, and conversation also, of Evangelical divines, is a presumptive argument, in the apprehension of common minds, that their preaching is more conformable to the Gospel of Christ. On this subject we cannot but remark, that a too literal translation of figurative terms, or of the popular language of the times, as also such a mode of interpretation as seems to apply to the case of individuals, certain passages, that had a reference only to the call of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews from being the peculiar people of God, have given to the common

version of the Bible an appearance of Calvinism; and were the occasion, it is probable, that sentiments of a Calvinistic tendency were often professed by the first reformers, who would have viewed with abhorrence the conclusions which yet unavoidably followed; which has caused that ambiguity, in ascertaining the sentiments of the early reformers, that has appeared in the controversy which has been lately instituted on the subject. We may add, that common minds are generally disposed to close with the obvious and literal sense of a passage which cannot always be the true sense in a writing, that must be interpreted by a reference to the manners and customs of a distant era, to local incidents, and the then popular sentiments and expressions; which contributes to enhance the popularity of those divines, who, while they quote much from Scripture, commonly adopt the most literal construction. To the above causes it may be attributed, that many of those preachers, who have been most ambitious of gaining popularity, and most successful in their endeavours, even such as have maintained the Arminian principles in opposition to the Calvinists, have yet, in their popular harangues, almost adopted the phraseology of Calvinism. The same reasons may be assigned for the origin of that moderate Calvinism, which is professed by a great part of those, who are now called *Evangelical* divines; who appear to adopt

the language, if not also to maintain the principles of Calvinism, while they deny the natural and unavoidable consequences.\*

The frequent practice of what is commonly, though perhaps rather inaccurately, denominated *extempore* preaching, contributes also to raise the popularity of Evangelical ministers. When the preacher immediately directs himself to his audience, he is certainly more likely to secure their attention, than when his own attention is confined to his manuscript. The language is generally more familiar, which is used in this mode of address, and more approximating to the conversation which the preacher himself adopts in his private intercourse with his hearers; and much more intelligible to the generality of his congregation, than that kind of language which a man of education would choose to introduce into a written discourse. A clergyman, who composes his own sermon, is likely to adopt it more to the characters and circumstances of his congregation, than a printed discourse would be, that is calculated rather for the press, than the pulpit. And one that delivers his discourse without notes, or previous composition, would probably do so still more. It is likely, too, that by the frequent use of *extempore*, or *memoriter* preaching, he would acquire the art of varying his mode of expression according to existing circumstances;

\* See Postscript to Appendix, No. II.

perhaps repeating the same sentiment in different terms, till he found himself generally understood. When a sermon is read, the preacher's chief object is merely to deliver it with a common degree of propriety. When he addresses the congregation without a written discourse, and watches the expression of the countenances of his audience, then his tone of voice, his action, and gesture, are all much more calculated to excite attention, as he himself feels more the force of what he delivers. However, as it is an attainment, which many learned men do not appear to be possessed of, while it is practised, in such a way, at least, as to attract the attention of the ignorant, by many illiterate persons, that have a larger share of confidence and presumption, than often falls to the lot of the wise and pious; it is regarded not only as a token of superior zeal, but as a singular gift of heaven, and an argument of the truth of the doctrines they enunciate. Various objections are made indeed to the *extempore* preaching of many, who are accustomed to the practice; but they are not sufficient to prove, that it is not a most impressive and interesting mode of address, when properly conducted, as, in fact, it is generally more successful. It is not indeed recommended to every clergyman to attempt it, that has not been accustomed to it, and finds that he cannot acquit himself with propriety. But it is certainly to be wished, that every person



designed for the Church were initiated in the practice of it from an early period, and that it were made a part of his education : and the early habit would then obviate the effect of that timidity which is so natural to men of real worth.

It is another recommendation of the same class of teachers, that either in extraordinary lectures, or in the ordinary course of reading the Scriptures, they are accustomed to deliver expositions of various parts of the Bible. Now the Bible is put into the hands of the common people, as the book which deserves their attention, beyond every other, as it contains “ the words of eternal life ;” as it is also the text book, on which our instructions are founded, and from whence we make quotations. But in consequence of their very scanty learning, the inability of most of them to read, even with common propriety, the many obsolete words, and obscure phrases, in the common version of the Bible, their ignorance of the history of the times, by which the Scriptures are to be interpreted, and utter incompetence to draw for themselves the practical inferences which particular passages of Scripture are designed to convey ; a great part of the book is to them almost unintelligible ; and every such person may well apply to himself the sentiment of the Ethiopian eunuch ; “ How can I understand, except some man should guide me ?” It is natural, therefore, for all serious persons of this class to

wish to have a book explained to them, which is deemed of so much importance to their spiritual welfare, and they are consequently pleased with a teacher that undertakes this friendly office. And in this particular, indeed, it is to be wished, that the practice of this class of preachers were more generally imitated. A few short incidental explanations and inferences might accompany the reading the Scriptures without materially prolonging the service; but particularly on that part of the day, when, as in many parish churches, there usually is no sermon. It would certainly add to the effect, if these explanations were delivered in an *extempore* form. And it would be a very desirable attainment for every clergyman to be able to comment readily, either in private conversation, or in public, upon any passage of Scripture that might occur; which he might acquire by frequently preparing himself for this office in the public discharge of his ministry. These expositions, and sermons also, or lectures for the purpose of explaining, and drawing instructions from, select portions of Scripture, would have a very beneficial effect with regard to the common people. By having their attention confined for some time to a particular passage, they would learn to read it better, as well as understand it; and when the same passage is again perused in private, their memory would be refreshed with the recollection of the

instructions, or a part of them, that were founded upon it. They might be brought also by degrees to have a right understanding of those texts of Scripture, which, by interpreting too literally, they interpret erroneously.

Another circumstance that adds to the popularity of the Evangelical clergy, is the frequent use of *extempore* prayer, whether in private, or sometimes also in the course of the service of the church. It carries with it an appearance of zeal and earnestness. It gives the minister an opportunity of adapting his prayers to the present circumstances of his congregation, which renders them more interesting. It is, likewise, an efficacious vehicle of enthusiastic emotions; and as weak and ignorant minds are naturally too prone to enthusiasm, this mode of prayer will commonly be approved of by those ministers who are desirous of popularity. And the partiality of the common people for it is such, that, under a similarity of circumstances, they usually prefer a dissenting congregation, where it is generally practised, to the church. A form of prayer seems more consistent with the decorum of public worship, and has other advantages. In private, however, as we could not wish to be restrained ourselves from uttering the sentiments and feelings of our own hearts; so it seems proper that a clergyman, in visiting, e. g. a sick parishioner, should find words of prayer that are suitable

to his present condition, and the state of his mind. And we must not wonder, if it should be thought a reflection upon a clergyman of regular education, that he should be surpassed by many illiterate persons in an exercise that seems a part of his professional office.

The more frequent and familiar intercourse between the same class of ministers and their congregations, and the lowest orders of people in general, accompanied with conversations that relate to their spiritual improvement, which is an obvious token of zeal, is also to be noticed as of great avail in engaging their affection and attachment. The mode of intercourse may sometimes be exceptionable; but if it is conducted in such a manner as is consistent with the dignity of the clerical character, it is highly deserving of the imitation of the regular clergy; and as such is largely recommended in the text. In short, all extraordinary exertions, and pains in diffusing religious sentiments, bespeak zeal, which, whether real or apparent, sincere or interested, judicious or otherwise, is naturally a recommendation in the opinion of the common classes of people: and these appearances of zeal, that, we hope, for the most part, is real and sincere, must certainly be conceded to Evangelical divines. To the above it may be subjoined, that in consequence of the several preceding causes of the popularity of Evan-

gelical preaching, the language of the common people is become nearly that of Calvinism, or accords with the doctrine of their favourite ministers. Hence the rest of the clergy labour under a considerable disadvantage in having to oppose the preconceived notions of the people, or, what in effect, perhaps, is nearly equivalent, their accustomed phraseology.

Amongst the various causes of the popularity of the same doctrines we must also enumerate the natural effects of a desire of popularity on the part of the preacher, without determining how far that desire may be influenced by ingenuous or other motives. And it is too true, that we are often more zealous in the discharge of our duty from the impulse of secondary motives, than from the simple consideration, that it is our duty. Thus many of the most prominent doctrines, whether true or false, if rationally interpreted, will, in their application, be accommodated too much to the weaknesses, prejudices, and imperfections of the lower orders of people, or be rendered too flattering to their vanity and conceit. There will be rather too much and ill-timed invective against the foibles and dissipation of the higher classes; learning will be depreciated, and the poor perhaps encouraged to expect an internal guide, that will direct them with much more certainty into the paths of truth and virtue. The desire of popu-

larity will also be rendered more successful by the preacher's joining himself to the most popular sect; nor can we be insensible of the united exertions and influence of a numerous party.

Another source of the popularity, as in fact it is, of the same teachers, may be subjoined; that several of them are accustomed to deliver the most frightful and alarming description of the vengeance of God and everlasting punishment. Many of the common classes of Christians have a curiosity to hear the worst that can be said on this awful subject. They are terrified into an implicit obedience and submission to the direction of their ghostly monitor, who plainly enough intimates, it is probable, that those who are not of their class are in a dangerous and alarming state. Then comes the healing salve. By the instrumentality of the preacher it has pleased God to awaken them, and they are now in a state of salvation. Such sudden conversions, indeed, have but an ambiguous appearance in the estimation of the more discerning part of mankind. The future punishments, however, of sin and impenitency is a subject that should by no means be treated slightly by the minister of the gospel, nor the word *hell* expelled from the pulpit as an unfashionable appellation. And the dread of the just vengeance of an Almighty God will generally be found the most availing principle in awakening either the careless liver, or the obdurate

sinner, to a due consideration of the error of their ways, and the danger of their former course of life. But when fear is the predominant, and almost only motive of a religious life, it commonly begets a base and servile superstition, very different from that rational piety, which is animated by such *love*, as *casteth out fear*. But this happy state of mind is not to be expected, except in those who have made some proficiency in godly living.

We have been hitherto considering some of the positive causes, as we may term them, of the success of Evangelical preaching. We are not, however, to be insensible of the negative ones; some of which have been transiently noticed already; such as the apathy and supineness of too many of the clergy; a mode of life not altogether conformable to the clerical character; too great and forbidding a distance with regard to the generality of their parishioners; discourses not sufficiently interesting, or intelligible, to the mass of their congregations; a want of union and co-operation; as well as other circumstances, that will be hereafter noticed, as tending to diminish the influence and utility of the clergy: to which we must subjoin non-residence, wherever it occurs. In short, though the clergy, for the most part, are highly respectable as men, with regard to their general character and conduct; yet there does not always appear a sufficient share of anxious endeavour to accommo-

date either their instructions, or their manners, to the greater part of their parishioners in such a way, as to contribute most efficaciously to their improvement. For the most part, indeed, their discourses are more calculated to confirm those who are already well disposed, and tolerably well informed, than to awaken the thoughtless, to arouse the languid, to conciliate the reprobate, and to infuse the milk of instruction into the minds of those who are yet babes in religious knowledge. The clergy are also charged with a degree of inconsistency in their manners and deportment. Many respectable clergymen, who are not deficient in a certain kind of pastoral intercourse with their parishioners, or averse from conversing with them on their spiritual concerns; yet, in the company of their neighbours and acquaintance of the same rank or even profession with themselves, appear to lay aside their sacred character; religious subjects are seldom or never introduced into conversation, and in lieu of *provoking one another to good works*, and planning schemes of beneficence, the only object of their social meetings is, apparently, to enjoy the pleasures of a convivial table, to entertain one another with ordinary topics of conversation, or to partake of some fashionable amusement. The former character, of course, is regarded as an assumed one, and a preference is given to those clerical persons, whose whole conduct is uniformly serious and religious.



I shall not attempt to draw a comparison between the pernicious effects of an injudicious zeal on one side, and of the defect of zeal on the other. I cannot, however, in justice, but subjoin, that whatever evils the Evangelical clergy of the Established Church are productive of, in unsettling the minds of the people, and seducing individuals from their parish churches; under the present circumstances of society, we are indebted to them, for preventing a much more general defection from the national Church. Were it not for their exertions, it is likely, the number of those would be much greater who would neglect almost every act of devotion, or would resort to some dissenting congregation. And it would better become us to endeavour to counteract the prejudicial consequences of an ill-judged zeal by more zealous exertions on our parts; than, when their diligence is undeniable, to pursue them with a greater degree of acrimony and invective than we do the frivolity and worldly characters of too many of the clergy. Nor ought we to be insensible of the multitudes that have been reclaimed from the most abandoned profligacy to a state of religious recollection by the very laudable exertions of the Evangelical clergy, and the dissenting Methodists, that, but for their *labour of love*, might have continued in a state of sin and impenitency to the close of their mortal existence.

Of the above causes of the popularity of Evangelical preaching we have noticed some as meriting approbation: others are referrible at most to a simple error of judgment. There are various other causes that are to be attributed to imperfections of human nature of a more faulty kind; such as an idle curiosity, a desire of novelty, which is studiously gratified, a disposition to admire any thing singular and extravagant, vehement gesticulations, or a ranting mode of delivery: sometimes also mere caprice. The singularities and eccentricities of a preacher will be likely to attract more followers than his valuable attainments. We may also remark, that ignorant persons, as incapable of pursuing a train of argument, or of keeping their attention fixed for a length of time, or also of afterwards recollecting what they have heard in any regular order or connection, are pleased with short and detached sentences, that convey some striking conceit, with a repetition of texts and expressions from Scripture, and other phrases of a religious nature, that they are familiarized to, which therefore they imagine they understand; accompanied with circumstances that unavoidably rouse the attention. Something therefore is recollected, which, it is likely, conduces more to the aid of enthusiasm, than to solid improvement. There are other causes of schism, that are much more culpable, such as a spirit of insubordination, a

diminution, much too prevalent in the present age, of the respect which was voluntarily paid to constituted authorities; sometimes personal disrespect, and even a principle of revenge; frequently interested motives, or, what has some resemblance thereto, an accession of consequence, which persons in a low station often experience, by uniting themselves to a particular sect or congregation. To which we may add, the interested exertions of particular persons, who, by every disingenuous practice, endeavour to allure as many as they can to their respective congregations. Besides the mass of followers, and occasional attendants, several individuals are often united in a more intimate society with one another, and with their leaders, which adds to their personal consequence, and engages them severally to assist in promoting the interests of the connection, and bringing over fresh disciples. And as the motives of schism and dissension are so various, a distinction is also to be made between persons of respectable conduct, and some information, and those who are influenced by no steady principles, or such as are grossly exceptionable: and we may remark also the distinct characters of the congregations that are frequented by persons of each different description. Nor would it be right to class several very respectable clergymen of the Church of England, who have enjoyed every advantage of liberal education, with some of the

lowest order of dissenting ministers, perhaps only self-constituted teachers, because, in certain points of view, their manners and doctrine have partaken of the same qualities so much, as to be commonly ranked under the general denomination of Methodists. But it is in vain to attempt to enumerate the various causes, that, under a diversity of circumstances, have contributed to enhance the popularity of Evangelical preaching, or to promote dissension. I shall briefly subjoin the following, that many of our churches are very badly constructed for the voice: at the same time, that the central parts of several of them are occupied by the principal families, in pews perhaps much too lofty; while the poor are crowded into distant and obscure corners of the church, where they hear indifferently, are ill accommodated, exposed perhaps to cold blasts, and are disturbed by the misbehaviour of the thoughtless and profligate, that are screened from the observation of their superiors. We cannot be much surprised, then, if many of them should prefer a dissenting meeting house, which is a warm and comfortable room, constructed for the accommodation of a large number within a small space, and a short distance only from the minister, as are also most of the new built chapels of the Church of England, several of which are filled by the Evangelical clergy.

But before this part of the subject is dismissed,

I must observe, that the too prevalent lukewarmness even of those who are commonly regarded as respectable characters, is the cause that the most seriously disposed persons, especially of the illiterate classes, are inclined to join themselves to those sects or parties of Christians that have the most ostensible appearance of religion, and such, indeed, as are tinctured with enthusiasm; as, in avoiding one extreme, it is too common to approximate to the opposite; and, in so doing, they are accustomed to adopt the distinguishing tenets of their party. Any other person, however religiously affected, and willing to co-operate with them in works of beneficence, if he does not embrace their way of thinking, is commonly regarded by them as an insincere friend, or secret enemy. This often disposes him in return to countenance too much certain excesses of levity, dissipation, and pleasure, not only regarding them with a degree of indulgence in persons who cannot be expected to have made the same proficiency in religion as himself, but even encouraging them by his own example: all which adds to the influence and success of the more austere sects. What I would infer from the above is, that it becomes every sincere Christian, by his own example, as well as conversation, to counteract the prevailing lukewarmness; and that it is the incumbent duty of a clergyman, by preaching as well as practice, to enforce a less degree of conformity to

the customs and fashions of this world, and more spiritual mindedness, than accords with the standard of moral purity and godly living by which characters are commonly estimated; so that those Christians, whose affections are most weaned from terrestrial objects, need not incur any acts of schism and dissension, to find associates in sentiment and conduct.

To obviate the above causes of the popularity of Evangelical preaching, as far as it may be proper to attempt to do so, in addition to what has been already suggested, we should, in the first place, use our endeavours to enlighten the minds of the lower orders of the community by a judicious attention to the education of the rising generation, and by more frequent and familiar intercourse with those of mature age. We should also render the education of the clergy more suitable to their intended professions, and endeavour, by every reasonable effort, to give them more weight and influence in society. But I shall not enlarge on these and other topics, that are recited in the text, or will be more fully treated of hereafter. I shall briefly observe at present, that I conceive it advisable to promote a new translation of the Scriptures, by encouraging a number of persons to undertake different parts, which might be afterwards submitted to the revisal of a committee appointed for the purpose. In a translation designed for general

use we should deviate as little as possible from a literal version ; but in many instances a paraphrastic version would convey the sense of the original much better, than a literal one could possibly do. For the use of the lower classes in general, a selection might be made of such passages as are most interesting to them, or require most to be generally known, accompanied with a few plain and familiar annotations. Mrs. Trimmer's Abridgment of Scripture History is circulated by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. But I think the historical part of the Bible might be compressed into a smaller compass, by giving the substance of the less interesting parts, instead of reciting the original at full length ; to which might be subjoined select passages from the didactic parts of Scripture, and a few also from the prophetical.

That the service of the Church is uninteresting to them is alledged by many of the lower orders as a reason for acts of dissension. If different classes of people, as we have noticed, are accustomed to join themselves to distinct congregations, and follow after a different set of teachers ; to accommodate all, it might seem necessary to have a service adopted to each separate class ; which would be too great an infringement of the unity of the Church. Perhaps a greater number of prayers, or forms of prayer, might be put into the hands of the clergy, and a greater power allowed them of selecting such

as were most suitable to their respective congregations, and, especially, to that part of them whose imperfect comprehensions demanded the greatest share of attention. We may infer, however, from hence, that a clergyman's duty is by no means confined to the public discharge of his ministry; and that he must by his private attentions either try to render the public service more intelligible, or supply what is wanting for the instruction of each class of his parishioners.

If now the circumstances we have noticed have contributed to render the Evangelical clergy more popular amongst the lower orders of people, we cannot but suspect, that a principal reason of the disapprobation they experience, at least the more respectable part of them, from another class, is not their Calvinistic principles; since the difference between them and the generality of the clergy of the Church of England is as little understood by many of the higher and middling classes of society, as by their inferiors. Neither is it a reasonable disapprobation of their characters in general; but, as is much to be feared, it is a deficiency of what the Methodists not improperly term *vital* religion: that too much abstraction from this world, and non-conformity to its customs; too large a share also of devotional fervour are enforced by Evangelical preachers for the approbation of those, who wish to colour over a strong attachment to the



pleasures, the interests, and occupations of this life, with an external decency of religious deportment; or those of the middling classes, that can find no more respectable employment of their increasing wealth, than by a servile imitation of the manners of their fashionable superiors. But apprehensions are entertained of political disunion, as the result of the secession of so many individuals from their parish churches. This too well grounded apprehension is indisputably a reason, why we should adopt every liberal and judicious mode of preventing it. But in arguing on this subject we sometimes mistake the effect from the cause. The changes that have occurred in the state of society, as will be more particularly considered hereafter, have very much detracted from the influence of the higher classes, and the respect that was voluntarily paid to stations of rank and authority. The lower orders no longer in the same degree as formerly under the influence of the clergy, or disposed to regard them with an equal share of reverence, are easily induced to follow one preacher after another, according to the predominant impulse of the moment, or to forsake every place of religious worship, and live, as it were, without God in the world. In this state of the public mind, there always will be interested individuals, that are anxious to alienate as many as possible from the Established Church, that they

may alienate them from their attachment to the government, or an existing administration; and the forsaking their parish churches to follow after an Evangelical preacher is often the first step to political disaffection. Another instance may be stated, which not unfrequently occurs. A clergyman, who is no Methodist, is, however, extremely diligent in the discharge of his parochial duties, and impressive and successful in his discourses. He is succeeded by another, who is more lukewarm, and whose instructions are not equally intelligible to his congregation; and his parishioners are easily induced to go somewhere else in quest of instructions equally impressive as those to which they have hitherto been accustomed; perhaps to an Evangelical clergyman, or possibly to a dissenting minister; and it may be, that at length their political principles are tainted. Shall we then, on account of these unfortunate consequences, exclaim at the vigilance of the former clergyman? Sunday schools have also been objected to, as training up children to become members of such Methodistical or dissenting congregation. Those who are most anxious to strengthen their own interest by adding to the numbers and respectability also of their congregations, by seducing individuals from their regular churches, will naturally be desirous of alluring those who are of the most reputable manners, and exemplary deportment. Are we not,

therefore, to try to make them respectable, or to furnish them with the advantages of a good education? From these instances I would infer, that in lieu of any ill-timed, or misplaced invective, and indiscriminating censure, the appropriate means only should be used of correcting every evil of this nature. Let every minister, in his proper sphere, within his own parish, by his own zealous deportment, endeavour to obviate the only reasonable plea that the Evangelical clergy or Methodists can have for seducing his flock away, of extending to them that friendly and pastoral attention for their soul's welfare, which is withheld from them by their own minister. Let us endeavour also to strengthen the bonds of parochial union, and thereby diminish that wantonness and irregularity of religious deportment, which is so congenial with the licentiousness of the present manners.

# POSTSCRIPT

## TO

### APPENDIX, No. II.

(See page 25.)

*An Inquiry, whether the Evangelical Creed is Calvinistic, or not.*

**P**REDESTINATION, and other topics nearly connected with it, are apparently maintained by Evangelical divines in such terms, that the doctrine of arbitrary reprobation must unavoidably follow.\* But the human mind revolts at the thought, that a great part of mankind should be predestinated *absolutely*, i. e. without any consideration of their demerit, and without the possibility of a recovery, to a state of eternal suffering. Such, I apprehend, is the source of the apparent inconsistency in those that lean to Calvinism, but are not professed Calvinists, or in those “ intelligent writers of the Calvinistic school,” who “ endeavour to disembarass their scheme from the consequences,” (it is surely incorrect to say, “ which” this, or another

\* If the subject of predestination is not now often adverted to by Evangelical divines, the doctrine of the all-sufficient grace of God, and its operations, is explained in a way that leads to the same conclusions.

person, “ has deduced from it,”\* but) which make a part of the Calvinistic creed itself, if the Lambeth Articles are to be regarded as containing the distinguishing tenets of Calvinism, in which we are told, that “ there is predetermined a certain number of the predestinated, which can neither be augmented, nor diminished:”—that “ those who are not predestinated to salvation, shall be necessarily damned for their sins;” and that “ it is not in the power and will of every one to be saved.” It is to be attributed to this inconsistency, that it is very difficult to make out what are really the sentiments of the Evangelical party; nor would it be fair to attribute to all, what are professed by some. Overton, at the first appearance of “ The True Churchman ascertained,” seems to have been generally regarded, both by friends and foes, as a champion of Calvinism. He however denies the fact; and others, who appeared to have had no doubt of it at first, after a more careful examination of the work, have been induced to change their opinion. The Christian Observer has likewise been charged with Calvinism. This again is disavowed. I cannot but remark, that there must be something very like Calvinism in these publications, or their principles would not have been so generally misunderstood. May we

\* See the Christian Observer, January 1806, p. 35.

be allowed to regard the Christian Observer as retailing the sentiments of the Evangelical class? I have now before me one of the numbers of that publication, in which there is an attempt to reconcile the unlimited, and irresistible, or infallible, operations of the grace of God, with the equally unlimited operations of the free-agency of man.\* It is possible the Christian Observer may conceive of the divine influence as a mechanical force, (which, indeed, accords with his allusion to centripetal and centrifugal forces, and again to the sun as disposing the earth for vegetation,†) that under certain circumstances of character, or mental and bodily faculties, produces *infallibly* a certain effect. We may also consider God, as variously distributing his spiritual gifts, in like manner as those of a worldly nature, according to his own good will and pleasure, and not always in an exact proportion to individual merit.‡ But then we must regard the divine influence, in its various proportions, equally as free-agency, and every other faculty of body and mind as so many talents, according to our employment of which we shall be judged at the day of retribution. However, as this is not Calvinism, so

\* See Christian Observer's Review of Daubeney's Discourses, January 1806.

† See ditto, p. 33.

‡ " He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

neither does it accord, I am persuaded, with the impressions that are commonly made on the minds of the people by Evangelical preaching. For as relates to the object of the present inquiry, it does not concern me so much to consider, what may, or may not, appear to be the opinions of some individuals, after certain explanations, which are unintelligible to the mass of the people, and make no part of their popular discourses; as what are the sentiments inferred by the generality of their congregations; or, rather, what are the effects produced upon their manners. For we cannot often expect, in the minds of the illiterate part of mankind, any opinions on subjects remote from the common occurrences of life, that can be clearly explained, and defended, as guarded from any inconsistency either in themselves, or the inferences deduced from them. We must have respect chiefly to certain predominant impressions, and the practical results of those impressions.

I have now before me a passage from an Evangelical divine, not indeed of the Church of England. "Who would ever have thought," says he, speaking of St. Paul, "that this man should become a Christian, a preacher, an apostle, a martyr? Was there any thing in him that should entitle him to the favour of God? Some have supposed so, in order to lessen the free sovereign grace of God in his conversion. They tell us

“ he was sincere in his way, had “ virtuous ha-  
 “ bits,” and therefore had a previous disposition  
 “ to receive the gospel. Nothing can be more  
 “ false. He tells us himself, he was “ the chief  
 “ of sinners;” he was “ in the flesh :” “ he went  
 “ about to establish his own righteousness, not  
 “ submitting himself to the righteousness of God.”  
 “ Surely here was nothing to recommend him to  
 “ mercy ; but every thing that might provoke the  
 “ Almighty to destroy him for ever. But “ God’s  
 “ ways are not as man’s ways, nor his thoughts as  
 “ man’s thoughts.” Paul was “ a vessel of mercy,”  
 “ separated from his mother’s womb,” in the coun-  
 “ sels of God : but the call was deferred till a time,  
 “ when the freeness, power, and riches of grace,  
 “ might appear with the brightest lustre.”\* Now  
 why this over-anxiety to depreciate the former  
 character of St. Paul? Surely, upon a candid peru-  
 sal of his history in the Acts of the Apostles, we  
 ought, in Christian charity, at least, to think of him  
 as he does of his “ kinsmen according to the flesh ;”  
 that he had “ a zeal of God,” though “ not accord-  
 “ ing to knowledge ;” and might possibly imagine,  
 that as the “ prayers and alms” of Cornelius, in his  
 unconverted state, went “ up for a memorial be-  
 “ fore God,” so his (St. Paul’s) zeal, though mis-

\* See Burder’s Village Sermons, Vol. III. Sermon 29. The  
 Conversion of St. Paul.



taken, might be the prevailing motive of the especial favour of God in the act of conversion. But is it not the natural tendency of such a mode of preaching to level all distinction of character, prior to a particular, and arbitrary act of conversion to what the preacher conceives to be the right faith; and to inculcate, or countenance the opinion, that God of his own free will and pleasure has predestinated before their birth, and elects, or calls whom he thinks proper, without any reference to personal merit or demerit; while this election, if not equivalent to final salvation, at least affords them a more confident hope of ensuring their ultimate election? From which the inference obviously follows, that others, whose demerit is certainly no greater, are not predestinated to salvation, and elected, and are, therefore, suffered to perish everlastingly, without the will and power of being saved. Perhaps in some other discourse, which indeed seems a favourite topic with this class of preachers, a contrast is drawn between the self-righteous Pharisee, and the broken-hearted Publican, in such a manner, that, in the application of the former character, there is an obvious allusion to a decorous churchman, that does not adopt the preacher's sentiments, or is not one of his party; and in that of the other to a reprobate, that is at length united to the class, or sect, of the preacher. Let it be considered, whether the following quotations from the same divine, on the

characters of the Pharisee and Publican, are not of this description. " His proud heart spurns at " the broken-hearted sinner; just as modern Pharisees, who look upon mourning souls as poor " canting, whining hypocrites, far beneath their " notice:"\*—and again; " Is not this all the hope " of some persons, that they never did any person " harm; that they pay every one his due; and, " perhaps, that they go to *Church* constantly; " behave decently; take the sacrament; give alms, " and so on?"\* Thus is the vilest profligate encouraged to hope, that by uniting himself to a particular party, and adopting their manners, by which perhaps he rashly imagines that he is suddenly awakened, and regenerated, all reference to his former bad character is forgotten; that he is at once raised in the estimation of heaven above all those, of however decorous character, that are not of his party; and is at least in a very safe way towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; if indeed he is not quickly persuaded that he feels a confident assurance of salvation; that he is advanced to a state of sinless perfection, and can no more fall from the state of grace which he enjoys.

I do not mean to insinuate, that the Editors of the *Christian Observer* are disposed to countenance all the absurdities of Mr. Burder, or other, so

\* See Burder's *Village Sermons*, Vol. II. p. 40, 41.

called, *Gospel* preachers. But my inquiry relates to Methodism and Evangelical preaching in general. And however some individuals, that are denominated Evangelical, may have thought and reasoned more correctly than the generality; and, by certain explications, have palliated, or guarded against the inferences which are attributed to their opinions; yet let me ask my readers, whether, as far as their observation has extended, the tendency of the pulpit-discourses even of the better informed preachers of this class is not too much to countenance the popular propensity to Calvinism, or to encourage those impressions which have been attributed to Evangelical preaching? And, indeed, in what more than a resemblance of Calvinism, does that striking similarity consist in the doctrines of a certain part of the clergy of the Established Church, Methodistical preachers in general, and some other dissenting ministers, so that they are immediately recognized by the common people as Gospel preachers? Now if such sentiments and impressions do not meet with the approbation of any of them, while they know the propensity of the multitude to adopt them, they ought to be particularly careful in their public addresses to obviate any Calvinistic inferences, and to employ their popular talents, if they are fortunately endowed with such, in counteracting popular prejudices of an injurious nature.

## APPENDIX, No. III.

(See page 13.)

*On Religious Education, more particularly the  
Education of the Clergy.*

A CONTROVERSY was lately instituted with respect to the degree of attention that is paid to religious instruction in our schools and universities; and we were certainly given to understand, that, in one of the principal schools in the kingdom, the scholars were expected to join in devotional exercises much more frequently, and that tasks of a religious nature constituted a much larger portion of their ordinary studies, than what, we believe, is commonly supposed.\* We will bestow as much praise as is due to some individual masters for the zeal and earnestness with which they have delivered their theological lectures, or endeavoured to make a serious impression upon the minds of their scholars; and we have no doubt, that the result has been very beneficial. But the general advantage of the devotional exercises of schools and universities, as usually conducted, is somewhat problematical; or rather the effect, we have reason to fear,

\* See Dr. Vincent's Defence of Public Education.

is very different from what could be wished. "The habit of prayer," Dr. Vincent says, "is a good habit."\* When prayers are read with the true spirit of fervent devotion, and the concomitant circumstances are such as are calculated to render them more impressive, we are not disposed to deny, or controvert, the Doctor's assertion. But some of my readers, probably, have had more than hearsay evidence for believing that the religious exercises at public schools and universities are not always accompanied with an appearance of much devotion; and when they are not, we may be allowed to think that the habit is a pernicious one, and that the prayers had better be omitted entirely. From the account, however, which Dr. Vincent has given, we shall not presume to doubt that the devotional exercises at Westminster are conducted with great propriety. And yet we may venture to ask, whether a habit of prayer is the obvious and well known result of the Westminster school devotions, or whether indeed the Westminster scholars are in future life distinguished as serious and religious characters. But at another large school, with which Dr. Rennell† is probably somewhat better ac-

\* See Dr. Vincent's Defence of Public Education, p. 34.

† It is well known, that Dr. Rennell accused "our public schools, and other great seminaries of this nation," of "the most lamentable and notorious defectiveness of Christian education;" to which charge, afterwards enforced by the Bishop of Meath, Dr. Vincent's Defence was intended as an answer.

quainted than he appears to have been with Westminster, it is reported, that on Saint's days, when the scholars are expected to attend church, during the whole time that the service is performed there is such a continual buz and whisper, if not loud talking, that the reader's voice is quite overpowered. On Sundays, the masters, the assistant masters, and other superintendents of the youth, think there is a propriety in attending themselves for the most part, and their presence does, in some small degree, though by no means entirely, prevent this very indecorous behaviour. What good, let me ask, is to be expected from attending such devotional exercises? What share also of devotional fervour is derived from a College chapel, as the service is usually performed, let those judge, who have had the best opportunities of knowing. Jonas Hanway, in the simplicity of his heart, it seems, paid a visit to a university, " with a view of seeing the practice of " the worship of God in a scene, which he considered as peculiarly devoted to his glory." When he was astonished to find, that the " students went " to a *certain place*, at a *certain hour*, to repeat *certain words*, at which not half those " were present who should have been there."\* Surely, the habit that is formed at such kinds of

\* See Hanway's Defects of Police the Cause of Immorality, Letter 3.

devotional exercises, is a habit of treating religious offices with levity, and of substituting a lifeless ceremony in the place of an improving and instructive ordinance. And when it is considered, that a large portion of the audience are designed for the church, and are themselves accustomed to take a part in the service,\* are we to be surprized, if they should contract also a habit of hurrying over the service as an irksome ceremony, or of reading petitions, and thanksgivings, historical and didactic chapters in the Bible, with the same lifeless monotony, or unvaried emphasis, and of subjoining a discourse as uninteresting, if not also unintelligible, to the mass of the audience, as a common-place lecture at a College chapel usually is to the scholars that attend? Can we wonder, then, if their congregations should desert them, and go in crowds, perhaps, to some ignorant low-lived upstart, that at least has the power of exciting the attention of his hearers, and conveying impressive sentiments in such language as is level to their weak and illiterate comprehensions?

The tasks of a religious nature, that form a part of the ordinary routine of employment at Westminster school, and the religious instructions that are voluntarily given by the respectable superintendents of that seminary, are certainly calculated

\* By reading the Lessons, as well as making the Responses.

to have a very desirable effect.\* But we have reason to think, that so many and such able and impressive instructions are not usually given in the other public schools. Very few lectures, or instructions of a religious nature, I believe, are delivered in the several colleges of the two universities. Lectures, certainly, are read, and very able ones, no doubt, by public professors in both of the universities: and some bishops object to ordain candidates, that don't bring certificates of their having attended them. But then let me ask, do theological inquiries constitute any portion of the prescribed† course of academical study, to which the students are impelled by the most availing motives? Are they the subjects of academical honours and rewards? Do they occupy any part of the private or public examinations? Indeed that branch of the public examination, (in one University, I mean, to which my remarks are more strictly applicable,) which approximates most nearly to religious information, is always regarded as a very subordinate part. What then is the natural consequence, but that theological studies, notwithstanding the divinity lectures, are either almost entirely neg-

\* See Vincent's Defence of Public Education.

† *Prescribed*, I do not mean by Statutes, that are not adhered to, but by Tutors, Moderators, &c. in the lectures, public examinations, and the like.



lected, or not pursued with any share of that avidity with which the sciences, or ancient classics, are cultivated.

But whether more or less attention is directed to religious subjects in the more public schools, or universities, than I am aware of, or believe to be the case, let me only ask of those, who are best able to ascertain the fact, whether the general result of the education experienced in large schools, or in the universities, appears to be favourable to religious impressions, or not. Of the number of young men that are every year sent to the universities, there are, no doubt, many who are seriously and religiously disposed, whose morals have been untainted, and who are desirous of living as becomes the disciples of Christ, and candidates for the Christian ministry. I would ask, whether such young men generally come from the large public schools, or some more private scenes of education; or, if a few of them are sent from the public schools, whether their religious character is to be regarded as the effect of the education they have experienced at those schools, or the result of impressions previously imbibed, which have not been entirely effaced during a short residence at a public seminary. I would ask also, whether those, who enter the universities with minds seriously disposed, are generally observed, by the benefit of their university education, to advance *daily in all*

*virtue and godliness of living*; or whether we have not had too much occasion to lament, that they are soon induced to assume a character very different from their real one; till at length their principles are shaken, and their morals dreadfully impaired; if indeed they do not go every length of profligacy and dissipation, by which the academical bodies are too much disgraced. Of those, who are less religiously disposed upon their first entrance into the universities, some few from time to time are awakened to serious thoughts and considerations; but by what means, by the salutary influence of College instructions, by the affectionate advice and exemplary deportment of Masters and Tutors, the energetic lectures of Divinity professors, or impressive discourses of university preachers; or rather by the private exertions of a few, as may at all times be expected in so large a number, as composes the academical body, of, so called, *Methodistical* or *Evangelical* clergymen? Let me ask again, in the prevalent manners of the universities, is religion at all a prominent feature? In any public, or private company, whether of the senior or junior members of the university, exclusively, or more promiscuously, whether for business, or the enjoyment of the pleasure and improvement of rational discourse, do we usually remark any thing to characterize men that are zealously anxious to promote the interests of Christ's

kingdom, and the salvation of souls? In their conversation, is religion at all a favourite topic; or does there appear any anxious desire *to provoke one another unto love and to good works; to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; or to put one another in remembrance of the things that pertain unto life and godliness?* Those who are most acquainted with the universities will be best able to give an answer to these inquiries.

Judicious lectures on theological subjects may conduce to render the youthful student more perfectly acquainted with the evidences of natural and revealed religion, to give him a critical knowledge of the sacred languages, and assist him in the interpretation of the Scriptures, or to guard him from misconceptions with respect to the doctrines of religion. And religious studies are of that nature, that they can hardly be pursued with much assiduity without influencing the heart. But it is not by devotional exercises, especially, as at present conducted in the universities, it is not by theological lectures however ingenious and erudite, or catechetical instructions however impressive, that youthful minds are brought to think seriously of the duties of religion, so much as by the private advice, and pious conversation, enforced by the exemplary deportment whether of parents, tutors, or other friends and acquaintance, with whom

they commonly live, or frequently and familiarly associate.

In a large school, the most prominent feature is that of an unnatural community of boys with hardly any other society whatever, except in a formal way. Surely no great share of moral improvement can be expected in a society of this description, nor such features of character and conduct as are best calculated to prepare the youthful mind for the practice of beneficence in that more promiscuous intercourse with the world, which occurs in real life. Mankind is naturally prone to imitation, and more particularly young people: but from the sinful propensity of human nature, and the predominance of bad examples, evil is imitated with greater facility than what is good. The corrupt and profligate are generally more forward and overbearing, while the sedate and steady, especially amongst young people, are reserved and diffident. Hence the most corrupt boys too generally contaminate the rest, and stamp the predominant character of the school. Again, another remarkable feature in a large school, is a certain diversity of sentiment and interest, if not a state of clandestine hostility, between the youth and their superintendents. While the former are studious to adopt the prevalent manners of their associates, they are sensible that their conduct cannot meet with the approbation of their masters.

They are desirous, therefore, of concealing it from their knowledge, and assuming an appearance of propriety before them. A systematic habit of duplicity and deceit is surely no embellishment to the clerical character, nor a feature from which much good can ever be expected. In the more private modes of education, there is an opportunity of much more familiar intercourse and friendly understanding between the superintendents and their pupils. By discrete conduct they will commonly have it in their power to gain the affections, as well as to secure the respect of their pupils, and to dispose them, as their behaviour will be under their continual inspection, to conduct themselves in such a manner as to merit their approbation. Opportunities also will more frequently occur of private and impressive conversations on serious and interesting subjects; which, when the affections are once secured, will instil religious principles into their minds with much greater effect, than periodical tasks or devotional exercises. Even in the larger kinds of private boarding schools, where, for the most part, the scholars and assistant-masters are all boarded and lodged under the same roof, so as to constitute one numerous family, the behaviour of the scholars is usually under more constant and complete observation, and more opportunities occur of familiar intercourse between the scholars and their superintend-

ents, than in the great public schools, on which account their morals are better guarded, and their minds more securely formed to virtue.

Whatever advantages, then, may be attributed to an education in large public schools, and there are many, doubtless, in various points of view; yet, as the utmost care should be taken with regard to those young persons that are designed for the church, to preserve their morals untainted, and to make a religious impression on their minds at an early period, it seems advisable that such young men should be educated in a private way, till their characters are well formed, and their moral and religious principles securely laid. And I should think, indeed, that considerate parents, whose children are not intended for the church, would be willing that they should forego many of the advantages of a public education for the sake of securing their morals from contagion. The mode of education, therefore, which I should wish to recommend for young persons designed for the clerical profession, if not educated by their parents, is, that they should be placed under a clergyman, who is himself a conscientious and diligent parochial minister, and who takes a few pupils into his family, by preference such as are intended for the church. In this situation, they might be exercised from an early period in studies adapted to their intended profession. They would be familiarized to the

exemplary deportment of their tutor, which would be farther recommended and enforced by well-timed improving conversations.

After the principles are well formed, and the character has acquired a degree of solidity, without doubt a certain portion of time, before entering into orders, might be spent advantageously in a more public seminary, in which, however, the several advantages both of public and private education were judiciously blended together. But the constitution, the course of studies, and internal discipline of our universities, should be much varied from what they are at present, to make them such desirable seminaries as we could wish to be the places of abode of divinity students, during the interval between their earlier and more private education, and their entering into the church. To effect a thorough change and reformation in the state of the universities would be no easy task. It probably could not be accomplished without some authority from the higher powers. But each tutor might do a great deal, within his own sphere, in promoting such studies as are better adapted to those who are designed for the church, and encouraging religious impressions and good moral conduct. But this could only be expected from such tutors as are not content to reduce the whole of their employment to a formal lecture, or two; but who are willing to take a friendly and affectionate

interest in the concerns of their pupils. Still, in large public seminaries, like the universities, even if they were much better calculated for the purpose than they are at present, there must be unavoidably a considerable mixture of character, and many circumstances must contribute to seduce the attention of the younger students from proper objects and employments. However beneficial, therefore, a public seminary may be for bringing forward young men, accumulating literary advantages to give a finish to their education, or to encourage a farther application to study ; for instituting enquiries and examinations into their comparative merits, and making their abilities and characters better known ; yet we must depend more on private education for serious impressions.

If a young man is designed for the Church, I perceive no reason why his education should not be strictly clerical. It seems indeed a little extraordinary, that the studies, in which a young person is chiefly exercised in the course of his education, should be such as have no immediate connection with his intended profession, and to which he has hardly ever occasion to revert in the discharge of the duties of his office. I by no means wish to debar a candidate for the ministry from the general advantages of liberal education ; because that variety of knowledge, which is comprehended under that denomination, has a tendency to expand and



enlighten the understanding; but only think, that his attention should be led to such objects by preference, as bear some relation to the duties of a clergyman; or, at least, that his professional studies should accompany his other employments; and that his thoughts should be directed into a train to assist him in deducing, from his various information, such inferences as may contribute most to his professional improvement. Without, therefore, condemning the ancient classics; because, in addition to their other advantages, they may conduce to elucidate the Scriptures, and the general history of the world, as connected with the evidences of religion; we cannot but lament that they should occupy so large a portion, as is usual, of that period which is commonly allotted to liberal education. And it is surely ill-judged, that young men should be exercised almost exclusively in Latin composition, and that hardly any attention should be paid to composition in their vernacular language. And the kinds of compositions in which boys are chiefly employed, are not altogether such as are best calculated for the purposes of common life. We must surely allow, that where instruction and conviction are the objects proposed, a plain, easy, and familiar composition is much more proper, than a discourse that is replete with poetical imagery, or rhetorical embellishments. The use of uncommon words and phrases, and of meretricious ornaments, seems

to imply a wish to deceive and pervert the judgment, and divert the attention from the thread of the argument. If our desire is merely to interest the mind, so as to keep the attention fixed on the subject, in hopes of producing conviction; perspicuity of conception and expression, a selection of appropriate terms, vivacity of stile, and sentences harmoniously constructed, seem the most necessary embellishments: and when the lowest orders of people are the objects of instruction, the choice of common terms and expressions is particularly to be attended to. Long before young people have acquired sufficient extent of information, solidity of understanding, and command of language, to compose a good theme, they may yet be able to give a familiar explanation or abstract of some portion of history, or other subject, that they have been reading, which would help to impress it more deeply in their memory. The art of delivering their sentiments readily on any topics that occur, or may be proposed, should also be exercised during the progress of their education, which will be a preparation for that kind of *extempore*, or *memoriter*, preaching, which has been recommended. However imperfect the first attempts may be, yet every desirable practice, in general, is rendered more easy by being commenced betimes; as the first trials should be on familiar subjects, and such as are rather amusing to young people. Another

attainment, that should be cultivated from an early period, is Elocution. The student should be taught also to read the service of the church, not only with suitable emphasis, but with a varied accent, properly expressive of petitions, thanksgivings, &c.\* Hebrew, again, is almost as necessary an acquirement to a clerical student, as the other dead languages, and should be learnt early. With the Greek and Latin classics, as well as the Hebrew language, should be united an attentive perusal of the Scriptures with critical remarks and annotations : and the youth should be required to write his thoughts upon select passages.

It is impossible to say what exercises may, at all times, and in all cases, be found expedient. The tutor must use his own judgment in accommodating his instructions to the capacities and proficiency of his pupils. It is not my present design to pre-

\* A proposal was lately made to the University of Cambridge, by an unknown person, to settle 200*l.* per annum, for five years, upon a clergyman, of eminence in his profession, and lately a tutor of one of the Colleges ; if he might be allowed, during that period, to read lectures, under the denomination of Ritual Professor, on subjects that related to the practical duties of the Christian ministry. The proposal was rejected. An application has since been made to the University, to allow of the lectures in some other form : the result of which I have not yet learnt. I shall be sorry, if the lectures are not delivered, as I cannot but approve of every advance towards giving the universities more of the character of clerical seminaries.

scribe a complete system of clerical education, but to communicate only a few hints, or I should not have omitted to notice the evidences of natural and revealed religion, or a system of Christian ethics. But, besides pursuing such a body of divinity, as is best calculated for his own information and improvement, the clerical student's attention should be directed to the contemplation of a system of popular theology, comprising such subjects as it is most proper that the lower classes should be instructed in, and which may be so explained as to be level to their comprehensions. He should be exercised also in composing on these subjects such discourses, as might be proper to be delivered to a popular audience. A clergyman, I am persuaded, would find it a very beneficial practice, sometimes to go through a course of popular divinity, and not to content himself with delivering only a succession of unconnected addresses. And it would be a desirable acquisition for a young man, upon entering into the ministry, to be already provided with a set of popular discourses, that had received the corrections of his tutor.

There is likewise a sort of practical education for the Christian ministry, which, I am sorry to remark, but very few of us are properly initiated in, and which I have endeavoured to provide for, in the best manner I am able, by recommending the pupil to be under the care and direction of a

diligent parochial clergyman: as I would also advise, that he should spend some time in such a situation, either immediately before, or upon his first entering upon the ministry. I mean, more particularly, what relates to the private intercourse between a minister and his flock, the practice of parochial beneficence, a disposition to enter into spiritual conferences, and the mode of adapting his communications, as well as his acts of beneficence, to the character and circumstances of each class. To which may be subjoined, that the student's mind ought to be impressed with a becoming sense of that rigid propriety of conduct, which befits the character of a man who is to be looked up to, as an example of godly living. The education of a clergyman should also prepare him for the discharge of those particular employments, which, in the next Appendix, it is recommended, should be intrusted with the clergy. For these purposes, it is desirable, that the pupil should accompany a discrete and diligent clergyman in his visits amongst his parishioners, should listen to his conversations with them, and assist him in reducing to practice his schemes of beneficence.

## APPENDIX, No. IV.

(See page 19.)

*Whether the Influence of the Clergy is as great,  
as, it is desirable, it should be.*

**B**<sub>Y</sub> what has been asserted in the text, it is by no means designed to cast any odium upon the Established Clergy; but rather to proffer an apology for them, if their utility is not altogether so extensive as might be desired; or if they appear engaged in an unequal contest with many persons, who are anxious to seduce their flocks from their respective folds. The clergy are, doubtless, a very respectable selection from the mass of the community; and, if their education is not so strictly professional, as could be wished, their minds, however, are generally improved by a considerable share of solid and liberal information. Were more business and employment consigned to them of a nature coincident with their professional engagements; were their education more properly adapted to the employments of that sphere in which they are designed to move, and their influence judiciously supported and extended, there is little doubt, but that, besides conveying religious instruction with

more effect, they would contribute very essentially to strengthen the bond of social union, and would afford the amplest support and best security to good government. This would not only render the clergy more efficient members of the community; but would add to the credit of their order, by diverting from the Church those more frivolous and exceptionable characters, that have little other thought in their choice of the clerical profession, than of a decent maintenance, and a life of ease and indulgence.

It is surely of the highest importance to the interests of the community, that there should be stationed, in every small district or parish, some one person of respectable manners and liberal education, well-informed, and of serious and religious deportment, for the purpose of disseminating religious principles, humanizing manners, diffusing general knowledge, supporting the hand of government, and improving the internal police of the community. But the same considerations, that manifest the propriety of instituting such an order of men, indicate also the necessity of using every proper mode of adding to their influence, and power of carrying into effect, the important objects, with the promotion of which they are intrusted.

During the prevalence of the Romish persuasion, the clergy had acquired an enormous share of power, which, in many instances, no doubt, was

shamefully abused; and yet, it cannot be denied, that, in various points of view, their influence was beneficially exerted in the improvement of the manners of the community, more particularly of the lower orders, that were most under their control. And to the dissolution of their power we may attribute, as to one of the causes, the origin of that spirit of insubordination and democracy, which has been productive of such injurious effects in the present age. However, as the power of the clergy had excited the jealousy of the higher orders, it was naturally to be expected, that, during the progress of the reformation, the divisions of the clergy would render them an easy prey to a rapacious and needy monarch. But the same desire of repressing the Church has been frequently manifested, since its power has ceased to be an object of dread or envy; and is but too visible, even at this period, when the state of society denotes the necessity of pursuing a very different system.

We are not much disposed to regret the loss or destruction of that portion of the power of the clergy, which gave them an unreasonable share of weight and influence in the political balance; which rendered them too much of worldly characters; or induced them to take a prominent part in every civil conflict. We do not, therefore, much lament the alienation of that part of their wealth, which was chiefly occupied in accumulated masses; and



by societies, which benefited mankind, in return, by a small share only of professional duty. Neither is it desirable, that any part of the clergy should roll in affluence. A decent competence, that should render secular employments unnecessary, that should raise them above the temptation to any mean and ungenerous conduct; and by economical management might enable them to educate their families in a respectable way, and assist their poorer neighbours by a few casual instances of beneficence, is as much as can be generally wished for. That the clergy were liberated from their dependence on a foreign superior, that the bonds of connection were dissolved, by which the whole order, throughout a large portion of Europe, was united in a community of interest; and that, by the permission of marriage, the interests and attachments of a family were allowed to supersede the *esprit de corps*, were also subjects that might be contemplated with a degree of satisfaction. The example of a well-regulated family, such as a clergyman's may be expected to be, is itself a desirable species of beneficence, and the children of the clergy are generally the most valuable in the whole community. But the loss of that portion of the influence of the parochial clergy, which was calculated to assist and extend their utility and powers of beneficence within their own parishes, or the neighbouring district, is what is principally to

be regretted. It was to the ample revenues of the Church, that the poor chiefly looked up for relief and support under their distresses, and from whence their wants were liberally supplied. By the loss of a considerable proportion of its wealth, the Church had no longer the ability of maintaining the poor, or contributing largely to their assistance. Their distresses became alarming, and the funds for their aid were necessarily drawn from other sources. Had the relief of the poor been regarded, as it was formerly, as an ecclesiastical concern, and the clergy been allowed to take a leading part in the distribution of those funds, their influence over the lower classes might have been perpetuated ; but, in lieu of that, the administration of them is, for the most part, intrusted with persons the most exceptionable for so important an office. By this injudicious step, not only is the influence of the clergy nearly annihilated, but the proper subordination of the different ranks of society is very much impaired. The poor claim a right to maintenance, and feel no sense of obligation or dependence upon the hands from whence their relief is advanced. As these funds are raised by law, and the application of them is under the direction of acts of parliament, the office of administering them is rendered unpleasant. But, if they were administered by men of intelligence and liberal sentiments, especially by their joint direction and concurrence, as

united in some kind of committee; it would conduce more than any thing else to give such relief the appearance and effect of voluntary charity: and to revive in the minds of the lower orders of people a sentiment of dependence on their superiors for aid and support, which is highly conducive to the well-being of society.

Another circumstance, that secured to the clergy a very considerable share of influence over the manners of the community, was the practice of auricular confession. This, no doubt, was grossly abused in many instances, and yet, we can hardly suppose, but the mass of good commonly preponderated. If properly conducted, it could not but promote a much more strict and intimate acquaintance and friendship between a minister and his parishioners, than is usually perceived at present. They would look up to him, as their guardian and adviser on every emergency; they would consider him as their greatest benefactor, that assisted in defending them from the worst of evils that could befall them, and securing them the favour of the most powerful and best of beings. And thus by the frequent recurrence of these spiritual conferences, their thoughts would be habitually employed about their own conduct, and the means of improving it. From the abuse of it, auricular confession at the time of the reformation was represented as not a necessary duty, and unfounded on scripture

authority. From one extreme, we too commonly verge to the opposite. The result is, that hardly any body now thinks of entering into any spiritual conference with his minister: A clergyman is almost disposed to regard it as an intrusion, to introduce religious conversation with his parishioners; while they seem to consider it as impertinent or troublesome, to solicit his advice on any subject that relates to the care of the soul. The consequence of which is, that worldly concerns are permitted to supersede almost entirely all religious considerations, that the clergyman is divested of the most interesting part of his professional duties, and for want of other employment, as the human mind naturally desires occupation, he directs too large a share of his attention to secular undertakings, or the pursuit of diversion and amusement; while all intimate connection between the clergyman and his flock, in many or most instances, is nearly dissolved, except what relates to common social intercourse with those of his parishioners, that are most upon a level with himself, with respect to their condition in life. In the mean time, the Methodist preachers do not fail to cultivate that species of spiritual intercourse with the lower classes, which now too rarely subsists between them and their regular ministers; and are even reviving confessions, and thereby rapidly acquiring that influence over the minds of the common people which the Romish clergy formerly possessed.

I am not inclined to defend the propriety of an unreserved confession of every sin and error. A prudent clergyman would not wish to be intrusted with every secret; nor is it indeed necessary. Let it be left to the discretion of each individual to make such communications, as he judges most expedient for his own improvement. If only it were regarded as a mutual duty, that the parishioner should look up to his minister, as the guardian of his soul, and as a friend and monitor to advise with, and that the clergyman should maintain such habitual conference with his flock, as would conduce to preserve a sense of religion in their minds, the result would be most desirable, and of very extensive influence. Indeed, under the Romish persuasion, religion was made to blend itself more with the common duties of life: some kind of religious exercise, or ceremony, occurred much more frequently, in which the clergyman's presence was necessary, or desirable; all which tended as well to add to the influence of the clergy, as to attach the people to their religion.

The silencing the Convocation at a future period was the means of dissolving almost the only then remaining bond of union of the clergy, and annihilating their power and influence as a body. Every question, that relates either to the doctrines or discipline of the Church, or any other ecclesiastical concern, if debated at all, must now be

debated only in the great national council. And while the clergy are thus reduced to the condition nearly of detached individuals, without any opportunities of conference, or excitement to co-operation, many circumstances of a more private nature contribute to render their disunion more complete. As preferment is commonly distributed, it frequently happens, that the nearest neighbours among the clergy are perfectly unacquainted with each other, till perhaps an advanced period of life, when they are brought into the same neighbourhood, and then their manners, their habits, and accustomed employments, as also their sentiments as well as their ages, are so different and discordant, that almost every subject of a professional nature is cautiously avoided, lest it should interrupt that friendly understanding, which, it is desirable, should subsist between near neighbours.

In addition to the more direct attacks upon their influence, we may add, that the changes, which have occurred in the state of society, have contributed very much to diminish the weight and influence of the clergy, as they have relaxed those salutary attachments, and links of subordination, by which the higher and lower classes were united together, and mutually dependent. The trading part of the community, by an accession of wealth, are no longer in the same state of dependence, as formerly, on the superior ranks; but, on account

of their defect of birth and education, not being readily admitted into the society of gentlemen, whose properties, or at least incomes, are probably much below their own; they experience an accession of consequence by being at the head of a religious sect, and, by the aid of that sect, conferring an additional share of weight to some political party: and, with the same views, they are induced to allure to their own sect or party all those of the inferior classes that are in any degree under their influence. The several inhabitants of a parish are rarely united now, as in former times, by a common attachment, as well as dependence upon some one family, that has maintained a kind of hereditary authority, which has been transmitted through a succession of generations, and by which the proper influence of the clergy has been backed and supported. The transitions of wealth has been rapid, and, with every transition, the united influence of wealth and rank is materially impaired. The respect paid to rank, and birth, and to authority also, is gradually annihilated; while the influence of wealth is precarious, and fluctuating. The dissolution of parochial union is still more complete, where manufactures are established. It is a mutual convenience, that labourers in husbandry should work for the neighbouring farmers. But labouring manufacturers, who may find some advantages in residing in country vil-

lages, often work for a master tradesman in a town at some distance. They have, therefore, little or no connection with their immediate neighbours; and as they frequently reside where they have no settlement, they have not even that species of dependence upon them, which is founded on the expectation of parochial relief.

But, much as it is weakened, there is no doubt that the superior classes have still a considerable share of influence over the lower orders of the community. Wealth, from what source soever it arises, or however it is employed, unavoidably gives power. But, unhappily, the influence of the higher ranks is too seldom exerted in supporting the professional character of the clergy, and giving effect to their religious labours. Not to speak of those who are grossly dissipated, or irreligious, too many others hardly make any distinction between the Sabbath and another day, unless perhaps they prefer it for travelling, and making visits. If they occasionally attend church, it seems more for form and decency, or as implying a political union with the Established Church, than from purely religious motives. If they absent themselves, the lower classes think they have an equal right to do the same, whether to stay at home, to take their pleasure, or to go to a conventicle; and their examples are a great impediment to the enforcing the laws for the due observation of the Sabbath.



Since then the influence of the clergy has been so materially impaired by extraneous causes, it is no wonder, that they have been less active in retaining the small share of influence that is still in their power, and less anxious to distinguish themselves in their manners from private gentlemen. And, indeed, the harmony and good understanding between a clergyman and his parishioners has been greatly impeded by his adopting too much the manners of the fashionable world. The habits and occupations, as well as usual hours of meals, of fashionable people deviate so much from what is common amidst the middle classes, as to render every kind of social intercourse between them almost impracticable, without a mutual sacrifice of comfort and convenience, which of course will not be submitted to with much frequency. A clergyman's children also are to be kept at a distance from those of his parishioners, for fear of their contracting vulgar manners. The unseemliness and filth of a poor cottage, it is probable, is too disgusting an object for the clergyman's family, if not for himself also. Thus is a forbidden distance maintained, and nearly a complete separation effected between his and his parishioners' families. We cannot be surprised, then, if they are disposed to prefer a minister, that is willing to associate with them more familiarly, and accommodate himself more to their respective manners and habits, if, at

the same time, he displays a zeal for their spiritual improvement.

The mode, also, in which preferment is distributed, has a tendency to interrupt the intercourse between a clergyman and his parishioners, in lieu of strengthening their union. It is not by a diligent attention to his parochial duties, that a young clergyman usually recommends himself to notice. In lieu of that, he must cultivate the acquaintance and friendship of, or confer services to persons in the higher stations; those, probably, who are connected with administration, and such services, it is likely, as do not altogether become the character of a clergyman, or, otherwise, he must spend his time in their society, partaking perhaps too freely in their diversions and amusements, if not also in their irregularities and excesses; or instead of obtaining preferment, where he has heretofore officiated with zeal and diligence, and is respected, he is removed, probably, into a neighbourhood where he is perfectly unknown, and has no friends and connections to co-operate with him, and add to his powers of beneficence. I cannot but remark, that by distributing preferment, for political purposes, the interests of a party may be strengthened, but the general influence of government is weakened, which would be much better supported by encouraging exemplary clerical deportment, and adding to the professional authority of the clergy.

The influence of the clergy being thus reduced almost to insignificance, we are not to be surprised that the bulk of the community should either not only cease to be religious, but throw off almost every appearance of religion, or that they should be disposed to follow after any preachers, that accommodate themselves most to their prejudices and imperfections, or condescend to the most familiar intercourse with them, or that recommend themselves by the greatest pretensions to zeal. Nor can we be surprised, if, for want of more steady principles, they should be led about from one preacher to another by a desire of novelty, or by mere caprice, or as they may be impelled by interested motives, or some other perversity of disposition, or as they are courted and solicited to join a particular congregation, or, again, - that they should be easily made the dupes of any interested persons, that are anxious to alienate their affections from the Established Church, whether they do it under a mask of religion, or without assuming any other character than that of licentiousness and profligacy.

It is a consequence of the relaxed connection, that now too generally subsists between the clergy and their parishioners, that the common people are disposed to regard the clergy in the single point of view of public teachers, and are inclined to follow after any neighbouring preacher, whose

doctrine, or manners, for the time being, accords better with their capricious taste and inclination. By these means every benefit of parochial harmony under the clergyman, as the connecting bond, is nearly annihilated; the unity of the Church, as an aggregate body, is infringed, and the reasonable submission of uninformed minds to superior judgment, as well as authority, is disallowed. Out of ten thousand clergymen, it is impossible that all can be equally well qualified. A man, who is deficient in one qualification, may excel in another: one who has not popular talents, as a teacher, may be an excellent pattern of godly living: and a clergyman of inferior attainments may certainly do much more good, than an alien, within his own parish, where he constantly resides; when his public and private teaching, and his works of beneficence, have an intimate connection with each other; especially, if his parishioners are disposed to receive him as their guide, and to co-operate in giving efficacy to his attempts at parochial reformation. I may add, also, that the Methodists are accustomed to interfere with a clergyman in the discharge of his duty, and to obstruct his endeavours to do good, more than any other dissenters. If he is anxious to promote the religious education of children, the example of the parents, when they are frequently seduced to a Methodist meeting, naturally draws the attention of the children

from the minister, makes them irregular in their attendance upon him, and disposes them to have little regard either for his approbation, or displeasure. In like manner, his efforts to instruct those of mature age, especially, if his discourses are a part of a well digested plan of instruction, are nearly defeated, if they are allured to gratify their itching ears, by attending upon one new teacher after another at the conventicle, where they are encouraged to maintain their own notions and prejudices, in opposition to their lawful guide. If, again, a clergyman reproves a parishioner for any instance of misconduct, it is likely that the next Sunday, out of revenge, he deserts his church for the tabernacle, where he is received with open arms. The same, probably, happens, if a part of his sermon should come home to the feelings of some of his audience. If he should *presume* to expatiate upon the sin of schism, and the duty of adhering to the Established Church, it is well, if the parish is not soon in an uproar. Perhaps, in the next place, he experiences some personal insult, which if not encouraged by the leading members of the conventicle, at least is not discountenanced. A person, that has lost his character in the estimation of Churchmen, betakes himself to the Methodists: he is quickly regarded as a convert, and, under an hypocritical mask of religion, perhaps carries on his nefarious practices

with greater security. And if, after repeated failures, a clergyman should at length become languid in his endeavours to promote reformation; who, I ask, would be the first to accuse him of negligence and remissness?

It appears, then, from what has been said, by what motives the mass of the community would too commonly be influenced in the selection of their teachers, and what kind of teachers they would prefer, were they encouraged to make their own choice. If, then, it is much more conformable to reason, that persons, who have enjoyed the advantage of a suitable education, and whose merits and pretensions have been examined and approved of by competent judges, should be severally appointed as ministers of the gospel in every parish, according to the practice of this country; it evidently follows, that every precaution ought to be used, that those, who are designed for the ministry, should enjoy the advantage of a proper education, and that none should be admitted to that sacred office without the necessary qualifications. In the next place, it will be expedient, by every reasonable method, to support and extend the influence not only of the clergy in general, but of each clergyman within his proper sphere; and to strengthen the union between the inhabitants of each parish, and their minister; so that he should be, generally, the object of their affections and

attachment, so long as he is assiduous in the discharge of his important duties; but, more particularly, by intrusting him with such offices and employments as are immediately connected with the well-being of his several parishioners, if, at the same time, they are compatible with his professional character. It will be advisable, also, to add to the influence of each individual clergyman, by promoting a more intimate union amongst the clergy, especially, by causing them frequently to meet together, to confer on their professional duties, and the business with which they are intrusted, and to lay plans for co-operation.

I am not disposed to recommend, that the Convocation should be restored, with any view of adding to the political weight of the clergy, or of giving aspiring men amongst them an opportunity of taking an active part in political questions, and by displaying their talents in the support of a particular party, to raise themselves to affluent and ostensible situations. A representative body of the whole clergy would be of use, chiefly, to deliberate on subjects that related to the doctrines and internal discipline of the Church, or upon questions that affected the connection that unavoidably subsists between government and an established religion. What seems most desirable, is, that the several dioceses should be divided into convenient districts, such as were formerly the rural deaneries,

in which synodical meetings, consisting of all the clergy of the district, should be frequently held for the purposes above suggested. A subordination of ecclesiastical assemblies, not unlike those that are established in Scotland, might be found advantageous: nor does there appear any reasonable objection to the uniting lay elders with the clergy in the parochial or district assemblies, especially when the business proposed to be discussed is of such a nature, that the assistance and co-operation of respectable laymen would be desirable. Thus, too, would the clergy be more generally backed and supported by the united influence and weight of the most respectable country gentlemen, farmers, and tradesmen. Again, as preferment is now conferred, it frequently happens, that a person of an active mind, and distinguished attainments, is immured in a small obscure parish, while another, whose virtues are adapted to a private sphere, is equally lost in the midst of a populous town; and, in short, that a large portion of the clergy are placed in situations very unsuitable to their respective talents and attainments. By being united in the same synod, their abilities and information would be brought, as it were, into a common mass; their powers of beneficence would be extended beyond the narrow limits of their own parishes; and they would have the opportunity of assisting each other by the aid of those attainments



for which each one is most distinguished. And, in this way, it would be much better, that a clergyman of superior qualifications should be rendered eminently useful in a large district, than that he should interfere, without any regular authority, in the concerns of other parishes besides his own.\*

\* The above suggestions are not novel. Great advantages, we are informed, were reaped from the monthly conferences of the parochial clergy in divers parts of the kingdom, in pursuance to the directions of Archbishop Tenison, in a circular letter dated April 6, 1699. See Dr. Woodward's Account of the Religious Societies in London, &c. Chap. IV. In like manner, Bishop Burnet, in his Pastoral Care, recommends to neighbouring clergy "to enter into a strict union together, to meet often, and to be helpful to one another;" and to "consult together in all their affairs." Nor need my readers, I presume, be reminded of the Society lately formed in the diocese of St. David's, in consequence of the suggestions of its pious Bishop, for promoting Christian Knowledge and Church Union. In a circular letter, the Bishop observes, that a great advantage deriveable from the frequent meetings of the clergy, which he recommends, would be the opportunities, which they will afford to young clergymen, of profiting by the experience, conversation, and advice of their elder brethren. The objects of the association are, to distribute Bibles, Prayer-books, and religious tracts, among the poor; to establish libraries for the clergy; to facilitate the means of education to young men intended for holy orders; to encourage the establishment of English schools; and to promote the institution of Sunday schools. Similar associations might be formed in other dioceses, with such variations in the proposed objects as are accommodated to the circumstances of each district.

One of the subjects, that should occupy the attention of the clergy at their synodical meetings, is the care of the poor. I am persuaded, that the poor would be more comfortably provided for, as relates to themselves, much more beneficially with regard to their moral improvement, and more advantageously in every view to the public, if the administration of the funds designed for their relief were intrusted with the clergy, in union with a few of the more respectable and substantial inhabitants of each parish, or district, together with the magistrates; and it would be preferable, on various accounts, that districts should be incorporated for the maintenance of their common poor, than that the poor should be provided for in their separate townships, except in some of the more populous parishes. The districts, that constitute the rural deaneries, would, probably, be of a convenient magnitude. The clergy, the magistrates, and certain other laymen, might constitute a general committee; in subordination to which, an acting committee should be elected from time to time; and the clergy, with certain other inhabitants, should be visitors in each parish.\*

\* In many parts of Scotland the poor are now relieved by an assessment, that very much resembles the poor's rate in this country. The chief difference, Mr. Rose remarks, between England and Scotland, with regard to the poor, arises from the superior management in the latter; where the poor are as

Another object, that should be vested in the district synod, is the inspection and superintendence of parochial schools. In the generality of parish schools of the lower order, the predominant character appears to be a shameful want of discipline and subordination, and a disgraceful negligence and remissness in every department. Poor children, after attending school for a series of years apparently with hardly any other object in view but learning to read, are often utterly incapable of reading a chapter in the Testament without repeated blunders. In many schools, even in some that are endowed with a design of educating children in the doctrines of the Church of England, not only the church catechism is never taught, but no catechetical instructions whatever are substi-

effectually provided for, as in the former, though at infinitely less expence. In part, it may be attributed to the greater attention that is paid to the early education of the poor. The selection of objects, to whose relief the assessment is to be applied, is vested in the Kirk Session, i. e. in the minister and elders of the parish. Infinite advantage, Mr. Rose observes, is derived from the constant and active attention of the clergy, who are invariably resident. The matter of settlement is indeed on a much better footing. But the injurious consequences of our settlement laws might be considerably obviated, and the business frequently adjusted without either a removal, or an appeal to the Quarter Sessions, were the administration of the poor's laws more generally intrusted with persons of respectability and intelligence. See Rose's Observations on the Poor's Laws, p. 13, 14.

tuted in its place. The children are perfectly unacquainted with the use of the prayer-book, and a Testament does not very often gain admission into the school. In short, religion, properly so called, makes almost no part of popular education, as it is too generally conducted at present. We cannot be surprised, then, that the liturgy should be unintelligible to the mass of the people, and that they should have no relish for a temperate and rational discourse. At the same time, efforts are made by Methodists and Dissenters, by the aid of schools, to alienate as many of the lower classes as they can from the Established Church; and in some instances, under the colour of religion, to alienate them equally from their attachment to our civil institutions. These are subjects that demand the most vigilant attention from those who are anxious to preserve the unity of the Church, and respect our civil as well as ecclesiastical establishments. The beneficial effects of the parochial schools in Scotland have long been experienced. Similar institutions have been adopted in other countries with equal advantage on the manners of the common people. In short, in those countries, in general, where the greatest attention has been shewn to the education of children, the inhabitants have been remarkably distinguished for their industry, the purity of their morals, and the small number of criminals. We may adduce New England, Swit-

zerland, and Holland, as well as Scotland, in confirmation of the truth of this observation.\* In this country, where opulence is more generally diffused, it does not seem necessary that the parochial schools should be supported at a national expence as in Scotland. At least, the experiment might, first, be tried by the aid of a fund raised by voluntary subscriptions, bequests, and contributions of societies already instituted for religious purposes: which fund should be intrusted with the synod in each district. Let a committee be appointed by the synod for inspecting the present state of parochial education, the emoluments with which any schools are endowed, the perversions and abuses any of them have experienced, as also the competency and assiduity of the present teachers, what improvements the existing schools are susceptible of, and where fresh schools are most needed. From the above fund, small stipends might be given to such masters or mistresses as are assisted by little or no emoluments, in addition to what they can make by the fees of their scholars; and some scholars, whose parents could least afford it, might

\* In Sweden also every child has an opportunity of learning the principles of Christianity; and no person from the palace to the cottage is considered as a member of society, till he has been exercised, and approved at the confirmation. Till this regulation is complied with, no one can hold any office, nor take an oath, nor enter into a marriage contract.

be paid for altogether, or in part, out of the same fund. The synod should have the power of appointing, or at least confirming, by their approbation, the masters and mistresses that superintend schools connected with the Church of England, or that derive any benefit from the district fund. Where new schools are required, and in some other cases also, a small stipend might be offered, on the condition that the parishioners would individually, or by a rate, engage to subscribe an additional sum. The committee, or synod, would also be enabled to judge where an evening or Sunday school would be preferable to a common daily school; as one, or both, might be in situations where children could get employment at an early age. It is certainly desirable that the children of the poor should, generally, be trained up betimes to some industrious employment, as well as that they should enjoy the advantage of a little common learning, and religious education. And it could be wished that a portion of that time, which is commonly spent by children in school, were occupied in some kind of work. It would be in the breast of the synod to determine in what situations to institute schools, that united manual labour with common learning. A committee might be appointed for superintending the internal government of the several schools, as also local and general visitors.

Having thus devised a provision for rendering

the education of the children of the lower classes universal, the next object of consideration is, in what subject they should be instructed. All that can be generally desired, is, that they should be able to read and spell sufficiently well to read the Testament and prayer-book, and the easier parts of the Bible with tolerable accuracy. They should also be taught to repeat the church catechism, and other easy catechetical instructions on the first principles of religion, which might be rendered more level to their infantile comprehensions, and might be explanatory of the catechism. They should, likewise, be made acquainted with the outline of Scripture history, and the most remarkable incidents; for which purpose they might learn by heart some Scripture catechism; and might be exercised in reading easy lessons founded on the historical parts of Scripture, and interspersed with practical reflections. These lessons would prepare them for reading the Testament, and select passages of the Bible, or would be a proper accompaniment. The service of the Church should be frequently read over, and explained, with the aid of some catechetical instructions. To learn by heart is an admirable exercise for the memory, and would be the means of storing the minds of poor children with many useful truths, which they might still recollect, should they learn to read only imperfectly, or partially forget what they have learnt. Short and easy prayers

on common occasions might be committed to memory, as also a form of self-examination. Psalmody is, likewise, a desirable attainment. They might learn to repeat a number of easy psalms and hymns, and be taught to sing them. By the aid also of the district synods, with the Convocation at their head, ecclesiastical discipline might be restored, the observation of the Sabbath enforced, and parochial police generally improved. Characters notoriously bad might be made the subjects of some public censure, as also any gross improprieties of conduct, contempt of the Sabbath, &c.; and the aid of the civil magistrate might be called in, when deemed requisite. The conduct of public houses should also be inquired into, that licences might be withheld from those that are disorderly, or notoriously injurious to the morals of the people.

The associations that have passed under our notice, are such as may be enforced, as a part of ecclesiastical discipline, or of internal police. But, as intimated before, the effect of associations for the promotion of any particular object is well understood by Methodists and Dissenters. And, probably, their attempts to undermine the Church will be more and more successful, unless they are opposed by the influence of similar associations on our parts. What, therefore, I could wish to recommend is, that voluntary associations, upon a much more comprehensive plan, should be formed for the purpose of calling forth the united



exertions of all good people, especially of such as are well affected towards the Established Church, in disseminating the principles of true religion, and promoting a reformation of manners. Whatever objections may have been advanced against the religious societies that were formed in the metropolis, and in other parts of the kingdom, during the latter part of the 17th century, and the beginning of the last; yet the countenance and encouragement they experienced from the most eminent prelates of the time, leave us no room to doubt that they were found eminently beneficial. The associations proposed might be confined to parishes, or not, according to circumstances. In some cases they might be formed upon a larger scale, and admit of parochial subdivisions. Though these societies should be open to religious people of every rank, I could wish that they were generally commenced by persons of respectability, as to their situation in life, and intellectual attainments as well as general character. They are not to be considered, as associations for punishing offences against public decorum, like the societies for the reformation of manners about a century ago, and some that exist at present; but, when other means fail, it may be deemed proper that they should have recourse to the infliction of legal penalties. For the purpose of deliberating upon the means of carrying into effect the designs of the association, and

of explaining them to the more illiterate members, frequent conferences would be requisite, which might be accompanied with some mode of instruction, as well as devotional exercises; as instructions in a private society could be delivered in a more familiar way, and with more accommodation to the circumstances of individuals, than comports with the solemnity and order of public assemblies for religious worship. Every member of these associations, upon being admitted as such, should agree to certain rules and orders, though perhaps not the same precisely as those that were generally received by the societies alluded to. I shall subjoin a few rules, by which the objects proposed by these associations may be more fully explained. I shall only previously observe, that some persons in the neighbourhood of each society may be willing to subscribe to their general designs, and to co-operate with them, who may not find it convenient to submit to the obligation of the several rules. The society in such cases may consider of the propriety of admitting particular individuals, upon a more relaxed plan, under the denomination of subscribers, or some other appellation.

*RULES of a SOCIETY for promoting REFORMATION of MANNERS, and CHURCH UNION.*

1. We, whose names are hereunto subjoined, do declare, that it is our wish, and shall be our diligent

endeavour, to promote a reformation of manners, and advance the interests of true religion and virtue.

2. That we are well affected towards the Established Church, and desire to prevent schism, to discountenance acts of dissension, and to support the professional influence of the established clergy in general, and of every clergyman in his respective parish.

3. That it shall be our endeavour to promote a due observance of the Sabbath, and to discourage travelling, frequenting public houses, buying and selling, and the exercise of any worldly callings, on the Lord's day; and that, as well for our own improvement as the benefit of our examples, we wish to be regular in our attendance at our parish churches, and will be particularly careful, if possible, to receive the sacrament whenever it is administered.

4. That such of us, as are heads of families, will keep up an appearance of religion in our houses, and will be attentive to the instruction of our children and servants; and particularly on the Lord's day evening.

5. That it is the design of our association to promote practical holiness, and not to encourage controversies, or disputations, on nice and difficult points of divinity: but that it shall be our endeavour to promote a reasonable way of thinking on reli-

gious subjects amongst all orders of people, and, especially, as relates to godliness of living.

6. That a Visitor or President shall be appointed, who shall generally be the minister of the parish, or some other respectable clergyman of the Church of England; who may also be Steward or Treasurer.

N. B. In the more numerous societies, two Stewards, distinct from the Visitor, may be annually appointed.

7. That the members of the society shall meet once a week to confer upon their general designs and undertakings, and *to provoke one another to love and to good works*; when the Visitor, or some other respectable member, shall read and explain some passage in Scripture, or other religious book, or discourse on some religious subject; and join with them in prayer.

8. That we wish also to encourage Psalmody, especially the use of such plain psalm-tunes, as a common congregation may be enabled to join in; which we design to practise at our weekly conferences, or on the Lord's day evening, or some other convenient time.

9. That if any members of the society shall be absent four successive weeks from the weekly conferences, without assigning a satisfactory reason to the society, they shall be regarded as disaffected members; that if their absence shall be continued four weeks longer, without their trans-

mitting any such reason to the Visitor or the Steward, as shall be approved of by the society, they shall be excluded from the association.

10. That to prove the sincerity of our religious profession, we desire *to maintain good works*, to visit the poor, to admonish them of their spiritual concerns, to relieve them in their distresses, and to encourage and assist them in the religious education of their children.

11. That for the promotion of such pious and charitable objects, as the society, collectively, shall think proper to engage in, or to patronize, contributions shall be made at every weekly conference, (*or*, once a month;) but that each person shall be at liberty to contribute, or not, or what sum he thinks proper.

12. That no persons shall be admitted into the society, but such as are personally known to one or more of the members, who shall produce satisfactory assurances of their religious and moral deportment, or of their effectual conversion and amendment, if they have hitherto led dissolute or careless lives: that notice shall be given at two weekly conferences, that the Steward shall be required to inform those members who are absent; that the election shall be deferred till the fourth weekly conference after the first notice; and that none shall be admitted without the express approbation of two thirds of the whole society.

13. That any member being proved guilty of gross misbehaviour, or immoral conduct, after due admonition; unless he shall give sufficient proof of his repentance and amendment, shall be excluded by the joint consent of the major part of the society.

14. That the majority of the society, at their weekly conferences shall be enabled to pass orders and resolutions from time to time; but that none of the fundamental rules of the society shall be altered, or expunged, but by the consent of two thirds of the whole society.

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The more works of beneficence the clergy are enabled to perform amongst their parishioners, the greater no doubt will be their general influence. The expences of drugs, and of visits from an apothecary, if the patient lives at a distance from him, are commonly so heavy, as soon to create a demand far beyond the ability of any poor person to defray, which parish officers also are unwilling to discharge, as, in the care of their own families, they are averse from incurring the same demands, while there is any possibility of avoiding them. Not only the poor, therefore, but many of the middling classes, when sick, are accustomed to follow the directions of some nurse, or other equally ignorant person, who perhaps is possessed of a few nostrums, but with no power of discriminating to what cases

they are applicable: or, otherwise, they have recourse to empirics, whose charges are moderate, and who strive to gain popularity by a variety of disingenuous artifices. Sometimes a contract is made with a neighbouring apothecary to take the charge of the poor in a particular parish. This is often one of an inferior order, who is willing to agree on the lowest terms. He has other objects in view, besides what he gains by the care of the poor. The stipulated sum is an inadequate compensation for proper care and attention, and of course his visits are very rare. To obviate these inconveniences, it is much to be desired that the clergy, in the course of their education, could generally acquire a sufficient share of medical knowledge to enable them to give advice, and administer medicines in ordinary complaints; to discriminate those cases where it would be most requisite to call in the aid of a more experienced person of regular medicinal education; and to be competent to judge of the propriety of the treatment.

In several instances, an aversion has been shewn for making the clergy magistrates, no doubt with a view of curtailing the power of the Church. With the exception of such gentlemen, as have studied the law professionally, I conceive that the clergy are generally the best qualified for magistrates of any of the inhabitants of the country. Whether a clergyman should be desirous of the

office, or not, must depend upon circumstances. If there are a sufficient number of active magistrates in the immediate neighbourhood, we may determine that it does not accord with the character of a clergyman to aspire after that accession of political consequence, which the appointment may give him. But if the case is otherwise, and there is a dearth of magistrates, I think he may reasonably desire an employment that may very much extend his powers of beneficence. His authority, as an acting magistrate, might, however, be restricted to his own parish, except in certain instances, which could be specified. And if the clergy had more frequently, than they have at present, an authority of this extent, it might be productive of many desirable consequences. In the present state of society, we cannot expect that the police of a parish can be well conducted, except the number of inhabitants is extremely small, unless there is some person resident upon the spot, or very near, of more respectability than a common constable, invested with legal authority to inflict slight punishments on persons guilty of small offences, such as common misdemeanours, trivial breaches of the peace, petty thefts, tippling in public houses, and certain profanations of the Sabbath, &c. The expence, trouble, and loss of time, are so great in carrying an offender before a distant magistrate, as also the difficulty of investigating the truth, and of obtaining a correct



account of concomitant circumstances ; all which are still greater in an appeal to a court of justice ; that a number of petty offences are suffered to be passed over unnoticed ; and the offenders by their security are induced to proceed from bad to worse, who might have been saved from ruin, had they been checked in the commencement of their wicked career, and had been countenanced by fewer examples of successful guilt. A parochial punishment now and then would have a very salutary effect : and the danger would be avoided of the culprit's being rendered still more corrupt by associating with more confirmed villains in public scenes of punishment. It is much to be lamented, therefore, that parish stocks, whipping posts, and other instruments of parochial punishment, are suffered to become useless lumber. Indeed, the laws relating to trivial misdemeanours appear to require a revisal.

## *CONCLUSION.*

As I have delivered my sentiments upon the interesting subjects of the preceding pages, with that degree of freedom which their importance appeared to demand, I cannot expect but that some or other of them will be disapproved of by several of my readers, and for various reasons. There are some, who are so averse from every thing like innovation, that they will regard those passages as particularly objectionable, in which a revision of the Liturgy, and vulgar translation of the Bible, are recommended. A disposition to innovate, or even reform, on every trivial occasion, is very far from according with the sentiments expressed in the course of these pages. But universally to resist every change or alteration, is at once to preclude all reformation. Reformations, attempted after mature deliberation, and conviction of their expediency, by the friends of the Church, are very different from innovations forced upon it by its enemies, and may probably be the very means of preventing them. I certainly am of opinion, that the Liturgy might be rendered more level to the comprehension, and more calculated for the im-

provement of the lower orders of people, who are the principal seceders from the Established Church. Some of its beauty might be impaired, while its utility were extended. Considering also the perpetual changes in human language, the improvements in theological learning, and increasing knowledge of the sacred languages, I think, that after an interval of 200 years, the common translation of the Bible might be advantageously revised. Various parts of the Scriptures have been translated anew, and much more correctly, by some of the most eminent prelates of the last age, but in language too refined for common use. It seems desirable that the whole should, in the same manner, be rendered equally correct, but in more popular language. But much as a revision of the service of the Church may be desired, very far am I from regarding it as the means, upon which we must principally depend for withstanding the progress of Methodism. It is upon the increasing zeal, and pastoral labours judiciously directed, of the parochial clergy within their respective spheres, and their co-operation in the promotion of the several objects of reformation which have passed under our notice, that our expectations must be chiefly founded; especially, if they are effectually supported not only by their ecclesiastical superiors, but by all persons in stations of influence and authority.

But before I conclude, I cannot forbear to notice one circumstance, that very materially contributes to the destruction of parochial harmony and Church union. I mean, the facility with which licenses are granted to the meeting-houses of Dissenters, and to dissenting teachers. As the law now stands, if a single person, in a peaceable parish, where there are no Dissenters, has taken some unreasonable offence at his minister, he has, if he pleases, a building licensed as a meeting-house for sixpence; he procures some ignorant person, who is licensed with equal facility, as a teacher, and with his aid, by every disingenuous lure and artifice, seduces the attention of his flock from their lawful pastor, alienates their affections from him, by malicious insinuations so timed, as to have most effect, vilifies his character, impedes his endeavours to do good, receives with open arms every person that has incurred his minister's displeasure by misconduct, and affords a legal exemption from obedience to the laws, that require attendance at church.\*

It is not a necessary consequence of toleration, that dissenting teachers should be exempted from

\* A person who does not pretend to be a Dissenter, by attending a Methodist meeting-house at an unseasonable hour of the night, considers himself as under no obligation to attend Church.

civil employments. Such an indulgence, however, may reasonably be extended to Dissenters of literary eminence; but not, till they have given satisfactory proofs, and assurances, of their literary attainments, the purity of their principles, their peaceable demeanour, and the utility of their literary employments. It is also extremely proper, that conscientious Dissenters from the national Church should be taken under the protection of the law, and allowed a convenient place for their religious exercises, where they should neither be interrupted by the disorderly behaviour of profligate persons, nor the intervention of a magistrate, who, for wise reasons, may be intrusted with a power of dispersing large assemblages of people, whose intentions are dubious. But such protection should not be granted, till the parties applying have given sufficient assurances of their peaceable demeanour, and that their only object is to meet together, in a quiet way, for the purposes of divine worship and religious instruction. At the same time, satisfactory answers should be expected to such inquiries as the following, before a license is granted. Under what denomination of Dissenters they are to be classed; or what are their principal objections to the Church of England: how many of their class of Dissenters reside in the parish, in which a license for a meeting-house is applied for; and what is the distance from the nearest licensed congregation of

Dissenters of their class. The minister, or other members of the Established Church, should also be examined, as to the truth of the particulars alledged, and be allowed to state their objections against the licensing of any such house in their parish; the validity of which should be considered by the magistrates assembled at the Quarter Sessions. And if dissenting congregations are thus taken under the protection of the law, they should also be subjected to the inspection and control of the neighbouring magistrates, who should have the power of preventing their assembling at unseasonable hours, when any inconveniences are found to originate from it, which has frequently happened, as also of depriving them of their licenses at a Quarter Sessions, when their conduct has been inconsistent with the conditions upon which their protection was granted to them.

## POSTSCRIPT.

*Remarks on Mr. Whitbread's Bill for promoting and encouraging Industry amongst the labouring Classes of the Community, and for the Relief and Regulation of the necessitous and criminal Poor.*

As the preceding pages were chiefly composed before Mr. Whitbread's Bill was brought forward, in lieu of altering, or omitting, what I had advanced on the subject of the poor, and of popular education, I thought it better to subjoin a few additional strictures on the various objects of the Bill. Though it is not intended to render the relief of the poor, and the education of their children, so much of ecclesiastical concerns, as accords with the preceding sentiments,\* and the practice of Scotland, where the result is acknowledged to have been extremely beneficial; yet, from the part which it is designed that the clergy should take, they would still be very proper subjects for their consideration in the synodical meetings, which have been recommended.

\* The reader is referred more particularly to Appendix, No. IV.

And it is much to be feared, that the proposed parochial schools will never be attended with the same advantages, as, Mr.W. remarks, have resulted from those in Scotland, unless they are equally under the inspection and control of the clergy.

Before I proceed, as various opinions have been maintained upon the subject, the necessity of a legal provision for the poor may be transiently considered. During the prevalence of a simplicity of manners, in the agricultural state of society, when the population is pretty equally dispersed, and, in each district, is nearly proportioned to the value of the land, or the quantity of employment required on the soil; especially, while the proprietors themselves are either engaged in rural occupations, or reside in the midst of their estates, wherever the benign sentiments of Christian philanthropy prevail, the poor would commonly be relieved in their distresses with more advantage to themselves, and the public, by the aid of voluntary charity, than by the mediation of any legal provision. Their characters, as well as their sufferings, would be well known by their wealthier neighbours, and the necessary relief would be readily extended to them either by those, who had been accustomed to employ them in the times of health and vigour, or by the common lord of the soil. But after the state of society has experienced a considerable change, when manufactures are introduced, and the popula-



tion very unequally dispersed, a large proportion, perhaps, being accumulated in towns or parishes, where there are but few opulent inhabitants; when the several paupers, their characters, and necessities, are perfectly unknown to those who are best able to relieve them; the liberal would be deceived by many fictitious tales of distress, till their charity might at length grow cool, while the necessities of modest worth remained almost unnoticed. In this state of society it seems absolutely necessary, in every Christian country, that there should be some regulations for the relief of the poor. The first and most obvious step is, that contributions for their benefit should be intrusted with certain respectable and intelligent persons, who should make it their business to get acquainted with the real situation and characters of the distressed, and to proportion the relief to their necessities. This method has been practised with success in Scotland, Holland, and other countries on the continent. Collections have been made at church on Sundays, and the more wealthy inhabitants have been supposed to have contributed in some proportion to their ability. But, perhaps, after a time, as the number of claimants increase, and luxury has introduced a multitude of artificial wants, the collections would not be found adequate to the relief of the poor, and many of the wealthy, whether from sordid motives, or from their extravagance, would cease to contri-

bute in proportion to their presumed ability. It would then be necessary to render the contributions compulsive, and proportioned to certain ostensible property. And this measure, from an apparent necessity, it seems, has been adopted, of late years, in various parts of Scotland. Now were the administration of these contributions, or assessments, intrusted with persons of respectable condition and character, any farther interference of the law would, probably, be unnecessary, and, therefore, improper. But in some parishes there are none such: or those, that are the most so, might be averse from the trouble, or regard it as an invidious employment. All persons of any degree of substance must, then, be compelled to take the employment in rotation; and the law must determine who are the persons who are entitled to relief from each fund, or parish. Hence have originated all the vexatious law-suits, and numberless other inconveniences, that have resulted from the laws of settlement. Mr. Whitbread has endeavoured to obviate some of these inconveniences by proposing a new mode of obtaining settlements. We will proceed to consider with what effect.

In adjusting the laws of settlement, the following circumstances merit consideration. The comfort of the poor; that they should be relieved amongst their relatives and neighbours, where they are best known, and have mostly resided. That the

number of the labouring classes likely to become chargeable should bear some proportion to the ability of each place to relieve them. It seems reasonable, also, that those persons, who have been chiefly benefited by the labours of the poor, during the time of their health and vigour, or those funds which have employed them, should principally contribute to their relief in their distresses. It is proper, however, that the affluent and idle, or those who live on rent, rather than profit or wages, or inasmuch as they do so, should in some way be made to contribute largely to the relief of the poor, and, by so doing, have the less to expend in superfluous consumption. The labouring classes should also be as much as possible at liberty to remove to situations, where they are most likely to meet with constant and profitable employment. It is beneficial, however, on various accounts, to promote and encourage a more and more equable dispersion of population. It certainly appears unreasonable, that a year's service, or residence only for 40 days\* in a parish at an early period of life, should give a person a settlement there, who for half a century may have passed the remainder of his life in a distant part of the kingdom. One year's service seems a more inequitable ground of settle-

\* As is still the effect of the last 40 days of a service, or an apprenticeship.

ment, than seven years apprenticeship : but, in fact, it is likely to proportion the number of settlements more nearly to the ability to give relief ; while settlements acquired by apprenticeships are those that are the most ruinously oppressive on particular parishes.

Mr. Whitbread's proposal is, that five years residence as householders, without being chargeable, or criminal, should gain a legal settlement. Let us trace out the consequences. In several manufacturing towns, the lower classes of mechanics, manufacturers, and the labouring poor, in general, reside in ill-built streets of parishes in the skirts of the town ; while they are employed by more opulent tradesmen, who, with persons of independent property, are almost the only inhabitants of the better built parishes in the same town. But, as the law now stands, many of the paupers have gained their settlement by service, or apprenticeship, in the more opulent parishes, who, by the proposed regulation, must be relieved by the poorer parish ; and the more opulent inhabitants of the town would be assessed more lightly than they are at present. The same would often happen even in agricultural parishes. Mr. W. has very properly endeavoured to relieve those more oppressed parishes by imposing a part of the burden upon the county ; and by rendering the law definite ; he has provided for the due execution of it. This measure, however,

is likely to be opposed by those gentlemen who have nearly liberated their estates from the incumbrance of paupers; and some others may think the limit too low. But the principal objection is, I think, that the parish officers in those overburdened parishes would no longer feel themselves interested in keeping the assessment as low as possible, and would court popularity by listening to every complaint, and pretended distress. But let us trace out some farther consequences of Mr. W.'s proposal. The principal inhabitants, and especially proprietors of those parishes, in which the assessment does not yet amount to the limit, will in every possible way endeavour to prevent residences amongst them. In lieu of profiting by the Act, to build cottages for the reception of the poor, that are intitled to relief, they will much rather pay a rent for cottages already existing, and suffer as many as they can to fall into decay. Several of the more creditable young persons of the lower classes are now prevented from marrying from want of comfortable habitations. This would happen much more frequently; which would be indisputably an incentive to prostitution, and imprudent and disreputable marriages, and such as are most likely to become burdensome in some parish.\*

\* We should by all means facilitate creditable marriages amongst the lower classes; in which sentiment I may differ

Farmers also will prefer employing labourers residing in other parishes, when they can do it with any convenience, rather than those, in particular, in their own, that have not yet acquired a settlement; in hopes that the latter may become chargeable, or be induced to quit their residence. Thus many parishes would soon become almost desolate. The labouring classes would be impeded in their endeavours to remove to more convenient situations; and that part of the poor more especially, who are least desirable inhabitants of any place, and most likely to become chargeable, would resort in multitudes to those crowded parishes, where the rates already so much surpass the proposed limit, that the inhabitants are more passive, to the manifest destruction of morals, and health, and an accumulation of distress.

Objectionable as are the present laws of settlement, it is not advisable to alter them, unless some

from Mr. Malthus, to whom Mr. W. has frequently referred with approbation. I cannot, therefore, but observe, that I must beg leave to differ very essentially in opinion from that gentleman, much as his work discovers of ingenuity, and elaborate research: though this is not the place to enter upon a regular refutation of his principles. But, after the most careful perusal of his work, I am not inclined to deviate in the smallest degree from the sentiments I advanced a few years ago on the subject of population, in "An Inquiry into the present Condition of the Lower Classes, and the Means of improving it, &c."

material advantage should result from so doing. The inconveniences of apprenticeship settlements cannot easily be obviated, while the poor are relieved by parishes. If a tradesman is desirous of establishing an extensive manufactory in a particular parish, and has a few acres of ground on which he can build habitations for his workmen, the parochial burdens would accumulate sooner from settlements acquired by five years' residence, than from the operation of apprenticeships. The only remedy is to make the funds, that have employed the paupers, relieve them in their distresses. And there the difficulty rests. It would not remove it, to assess personal property. The proprietor has his manufactory, perhaps, his mill, it may be, in one parish, while his workmen reside in another. As it is proposed to assess personal property, before we proceed, we may briefly observe, that difficulties will occur in ascertaining it, and it will commonly be estimated below its real value. But it had better be assessed at a low rate, than not at all. Great capitalists, indeed, ought not to escape from contributing to the relief of the poor; but as profit is a less judicious source of taxes, and assessments, than rent, when a tradesman's income does not exceed a certain limit, his stock in trade ought to be exempted from the assessment.

The other most material inconveniences resulting from the settlement laws might be alleviated with

greater facility. If a number of adjacent parishes were united into districts, and a general committee composed of the magistrates, the resident clergy, and one or more other inhabitants of each parish, according to its size, of the most respectable condition, to whom, at their stated meetings, might be referred all questions of difficulty in regard to the management of the poor; by means of a correspondence with the committees of other districts, the places of settlement might, commonly, be determined, and relief, under certain restrictions, granted to the poor at the places where they are residing at the time that they become distressed.

It is certainly an object much to be desired, that vestries should be better regulated, and that the administration of parish business should be thrown more into the hands of persons of respectability. To do this with an appearance of equity, I have on former occasions suggested the propriety of considering the poor's rate, in the eye of the law, as exacted of the landlord, on whom indeed it ultimately falls; though it might be evaded by a private agreement between the landlord and his tenant.\* The landlord then alone would have a right to vote in the disposal of his own property; though, if not resident, he might, if his property amounted to

\* See "An Inquiry into the present Condition of the Lower Classes, &c.;" see also "An Essay on Schools of Industry, &c."



a certain value, be represented by an approved deputy, i. e. a respectable tenant. As Mr. W. has proposed, that persons of a certain amount of property should have more than one vote, I cannot but remark, that the same persons should be expected to serve parish offices more frequently in the same proportion: and that certain other persons, that are assessed at a low rate, should be exempted from parish offices, provided that they would forego their privilege of voting at vestries. That the clergyman should be constituted president of the vestry, and encouraged to attend the monthly meetings, is calculated to have a good effect; but as he commonly pays a mere trifle to the poor's rate, he, probably, would not have a more effective vote than the meanest person that is assessed.

I perfectly accord with Mr. W. in thinking, that many persons, who are commonly received into workhouses, might be maintained amongst their relatives with more comfort to themselves, and with less expence to the public. But there are many of the labouring classes of the worst characters, who would become chargeable, or be rendered more so to a parish, when they have not the terror of a workhouse before them, which to them should be a species of house of correction. And I am apprehensive, that under the proposed regulations, this class of people will be the cause of a great deal of

expence, as well as trouble to their parishioners; as at those times, when work is most scarce, nobody perhaps will be willing to employ them on any terms, except some person that contracts for their labour, at the same time that he contracts for the maintenance and employment of others of the necessitous poor. Mr. W. seems aware, that there may still be several persons, such as are sickly, infirm, aged, children, idiots, &c. who could not be properly taken care of in private houses: and that it might be necessary to have a house for the reception of such, and to contract with some person for the maintenance of them, which none would be willing to agree to, if the number is very small, and the emolument but trifling, which would probably happen in country parishes, if a smaller number are to be received into such houses, than has been usual heretofore. On this, as well as many other accounts, it would often be found desirable to have some one house, within the circuit of a number of adjoining parishes, with, perhaps, a little farm annexed, that should at once be an asylum for the impotent and aged poor, a school of industry for orphans, and a temporary lodging or receptacle for such other poor persons requiring relief, for whom no other suitable habitation can be conveniently procured; the superintendent of which might engage also to find employment for those poor persons who are occasionally distressed only

for want of work. Each parish might pay its proportion towards the maintenance of the house, or the terms of the contract, according to the number of its paupers that are admitted from time to time. The government of the house should be under the inspection and control of such a committee, as above proposed. If parishes should no longer be empowered to oblige the poor, that demand relief, to go into workhouses, it is proper, no doubt, that a *maximum* should be fixed of the relief which they can be compelled to give. The *maximum* proposed by Mr. W. is rather too vague, as in some parts of the kingdom the wages of labour are double what they are in others, not indeed from the higher price of necessaries, but from the greater demand for labour. It would be better perhaps to regulate this *maximum* by the price of wheat, or customary bread corn, in each district. The clause to prevent parishes from farming their poor in a mass, highly merits commendation.

The intention of Mr. W. to improve the general character of the poor, to put them upon their exertions, and dispose them to regard it as a degradation to accept of parochial relief, is excellent. I have only farther to observe, in regard to the parochial schools, that in many parishes there are emoluments, or benefactions, for the promotion of similar schools, with those proposed by Mr. W. Several of them are grossly abused, and perverted, from

their original design : some have fallen into very improper hands, and in lieu of furthering the laudable intentions of the Bill, would be the means of impeding, or defeating them. And, at present, there is no way of gaining redress, but by an appeal to chancery; which nobody is willing to undertake. It is to be desired, that an inquiry should be authorized into the present state of such charities; that the magistrates at their Quarter Sessions should be empowered to correct or prevent abuses, and to subject them to such regulations, as that they should be no obstruction to the intentions of the Act, and should not interrupt that order and regularity in a parish, which it is designed to promote, by the aid of the proposed schools.

With respect to the Poor's Fund, and the Poor's Assurance Office,\* I shall only remark, that there may be persons, who from time to time may remit sums of money to these offices unknown to their parishes, and on the first occasion or pretence apply for relief. There should be some easy method, by which the overseers of a parish might know, whether any persons applying for relief have secured money in these funds, and to what amount.

\* Something similar to these institutions was recommended, on a private scale, in the Postscript to " An Essay on Schools of Industry, &c.", in which I suggested the propriety of selling annuities for the benefit of poor widows, and of securing sums of money for a son or daughter at an age, when they might be expected to marry, or settle in the world.

The magistrates are empowered by Mr. W.'s Bill, in cases of sickness, to grant relief to poor persons, notwithstanding their being possessed of property to a certain amount. The kind of property perhaps is not well described. In extreme cases, it is proper they should have such a power: but it should be exercised with great caution. When a labouring man becomes possessed of a cow, he considers himself as advanced in the scale of society, and is no longer regarded as liable to become chargeable. He then, probably, becomes a member of a benefit society, that he may obtain relief from thence in sickness; and is put upon his exertions, lest he should again be reduced to his former state of degradation; and by good management, and avoiding needless expences, he lives with comfort to himself and family at an expence that would hardly keep others from a workhouse, and is soon, perhaps, enabled to make an additional purchase. When, by severe and protracted afflictions, the man is in danger of parting with his cow, and of being reduced to his former state, it may be proper that there should be a power of adjudging him some relief. But if he found it easy on every trivial complaint to obtain relief, he would lose the feelings of independence, and conscious superiority; he would avoid the expence of being a member of a benefit society; and would have no desire to render his situation more independent, lest he should forfeit his claim

to parochial assistance. In most of the above cases the relief granted might be confined to medical assistance.

Far am I from being so sanguine, as Mr. W. appears to be, as to imagine, that, by the operation of the proposed Act, in a course of years, the poor's laws should gradually disappear, or that there should be no further occasion for the execution of them. The first effect, doubtless, would be an additional expence to the community in the form of a poor's rate: and to some parishes a very considerable, and even a permanent incumbrance. The diminution in the total amount of the poor's rate will not be very perceptible, till the parochial schools have had their full effect in the improvement of the character of the lower classes. A few persons may become candidates for the premiums offered at the Quarter Sessions; and the number of these may gradually increase. The provincial poor, I am apprehensive, will discover a considerable reluctance to remit their savings to the Poor's Funds, and will betray a suspicion, as to the security of their property. They are not willing it should be removed so far from their powers of observation; and would much more readily deposit it in some provincial bank, where they could themselves go into the office, and receive an acknowledgement from persons of whom they have some knowledge. But, if we are not willing to raise our expectations

too high, we are truly sensible that the Honourable Mover of the Bill is abundantly entitled to the plaudits of his countrymen: and after some dubious points have been re-considered, and modified by the accumulated wisdom of the community, it is to be hoped, that, as to its predominant objects, it will shortly be enrolled in the national code of legislation.

THE END.





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